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by DORIS LESSING

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CRC 131

EDITORIAL

Bobby a job?

OUR policemen are wonderful, but even the most wonderful cannot do a dozen jobs at once, in addition to his main duties of preventing and detecting crime.

Yet in Northumberland the police are used as fishery officers. In Great Yarmouth they have to inspect fire-escapes in factories.

In Cornwall and thirty-three other places they have additional duties under the Petroleum Acts. In the West Riding of Yorkshire and sixteen other spots they administer the Shops Act.

A COMMITTEE set up by the Home Secretary has just reported that in its view the police should not perform these duties and thirty-eight such others, as town crier, weights and measures inspector, shoeblack licenser, and mortuary attendant.

MR. BRUTTON
"Relief is urgent . . ."

Mr. Charles Brutton, a member of the committee and Clerk of Dorset County—which has its own employees to do all these tasks—says: "The rising crime figures make it urgent that police should be relieved of all duties other than those connected with the maintenance of order, for which the service was devised."

Yet we are 8,207 men short on the number of policemen it is calculated are required. The 63,434 policemen in the country simply cannot cope with the duties of 71,641 on the authorized establishment.

So while they are out supervising sheep-dipping or inspecting seamen's lodging-houses, more than half a million crimes may be committed in a year.

THE committee says, in effect, that policemen should not go on competing with the Boy Scouts' bob-a-job activities. This recommendation must be put into force—now. The local councils must shoulder the burdens which are rightly theirs.

We might then go farther, and relieve the police of most of their traffic duties.

A Traffic Corps, without the rigid qualifications of age, height and physical fitness which the police insist upon, could direct traffic and enforce motoring laws.

WORTHWHILE developments might be encouraged. A voluntary section of the Traffic Corps could provide the citizen with a positive way of helping to reduce death on the roads.

Women police are easier to recruit than men. Their numbers should also be increased.

The policeman must get back to his job of protecting life and property, and swiftly catching wrongdoers.

THIS WEEK'S COVER

DRAMA and excitement have always characterized Harry Zelinski's illustrations to JOHN BULL stories and adventure series. But for his first cover picture—a sensitive study in expressions—he paints in a gentler mood, using as models his wife Mary and his daughters Pauline and Diana, aged five and seven. "It is not an incident from real life," says Zelinski. "But I've a feeling that it soon will be. Pauline starts school this term."

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SEPTEMBER 5, 1953 VOL. 94 NO. 2462 PHONE: TEMPLE BAR 2468 GRAMS: HEROICALLY, WESTCENT, LONDON

FREE SPEECH

Are mothers better than nannies?

READING a copy of a 1900 magazine, my wife found an article on choosing a nursemaid for children. "If we had a nannie and our own nursery, I'm sure we should all benefit," she said.

The children would never see her tired and irritable, she argued. "I would visit them occasionally during the day. To them, I would be a mother who was always bright and cheerful. And with less work and worry, I could be a more enlightened parent—taking a greater interest in other things." I disagreed with her. "I remember my mother and father popping into my nursery before they went off to the theatre," I said. "I often wished they would stay and read me a story, although I had the kindest of nursemaids." My wife insists that the nannie custom is dying out for financial reasons only. I say it is being killed by wiser ideas on parenthood. — V. H. D. M., Amersham, Buckinghamshire.

Nature's Ally

I KNOW a disabled war veteran who is a keen gardener. The other day, I came across him in a country lane. He was planting something in the hedgerow. "Whatever are you up to?" I asked. He explained that he collects discarded roots of flowering plants, such as lupins, from his friends' gardens, and plants them in the ditches and hedgerows of the countryside. Over the years, his efforts must have added much beauty to the lanes. — D. D. SERVICE, Herbert Street, Belfast.

Nightmare Rhymes

A YELL from my small son brought me rushing into the garden. I found a jackdaw perched calmly on his shoulder, and reassured him that it was only a tame bird which often flew round the garden. "Oh, I thought it was the bird that pecked off the maid's nose," he said. It made me think that some of our nursery rhymes should be altered to avoid scaring children.—MRS. D. ELLIOTT, Kinross Avenue, Derby.

One version of "Sing A Song Of Sixpence," used by the B.B.C. in the programme "Listen With Mother," has a happy ending. The last verse runs:

She made such a commotion
That a little jenny wren
Flew down into the garden
And popped it back again.

The B.B.C. explains: "Children might have been upset because the maid lost her nose. There are often many versions of a nursery rhyme. We prefer the happier one."

Busman's Holiday

WHENEVER I am on holiday, I try to hide the fact that I am a teacher. But if people find out, I am either treated with a pitying tolerance, or inundated with educational problems. This year, I kept my secret until the last day of my seaside holiday. Then it leaked out. "Oh, you're a teacher!" one woman remarked. "If only I'd known, you could have helped my little boy with his reading each day."—MISS W. B. J., Worksop, Nottinghamshire.

Tasty Morsels

THE writer of the "plain food" letter in "Free Speech," August 8, seems easily discouraged. In the school canteen which I run, I add grated carrot, chopped apples and oranges, and a few dates, to salads. We serve all the usual sauces, such as apple with pork, parsley with fish, onion or tomato with sausages. The children are easily encouraged to try these often unfamiliar additions, and they rarely leave any on their plates.—E. B., Sussex.

Black Mark

AS a Girl Guide, I feel sure that the angry look on the gamekeeper's face in Ronald Lampitt's cover (JOHN BULL, August 1) was due to the fire on his well-kept grass. When the party went home, they would have left an unsightly black patch. All

Guides know that when lighting fires in the open, a square of turf should first be cut away. This is replaced when the fire is extinguished, leaving no trace. — MARY JOYCE, Leyswood Drive, Newbury Park, Essex.

Colour Correction

BARRY PEROWNE'S story, *The Gallant Professor*, which I particularly enjoyed, was conceived in a Bournemouth hotel where he and I were staying. He usually starts the serious work of his "day" after midnight, but even at that time I found the manner in which he outlined his story delightful. I remember that he seemed rather uncertain about the colour mark on the cap of a .303 tracer bullet.—CHAS. J. SHANNON, Coventry Road, Southampton.

Barry Perowne wrongly chose purple for his tracer bullets. Many readers have hastened to give him the right colour—red. Purple denotes ball ammunition.

Special Service

DURING a short tour of Western Europe, I noticed that most hotels offered bed *without* breakfast. I liked leaving my hotel in the early morning and going on a few miles until I felt like breakfast at a wayside restaurant or café. And it makes hotel bills more

Begins in John Bull next week

A gripping new novel

DEATH AND THE SKY ABOVE

by ANDREW GARVE

Full details on page 14

reasonable. Why can't a few proprietors try this idea out here? — PETER MCINNIS, Roxburghshire.

. . . While we were motoring in Scotland, we spent much weary effort in trudging up long entrance drives—only to find that the hotel had no room. "No vacancy" notices would help the touring visitor. — MISS M. M., Glasgow.

Name To Suit

YOUR correspondent, who wrote on dogs' names, would be bewildered at my young daughter's choice of names for her pets. The cat is called Pizzicato, because "she walks like a violin sounds when you don't use the bow." The tortoise is called Timothy, because "he looks like a Timothy." The dog's name is Tuppence, because my daughter has to save twopence a week to pay for his licence.—MRS. E. D., Birmingham.

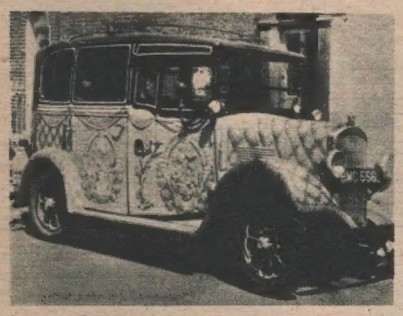
. . . We name our dogs according to their characteristics. First, there is Dismal—an Airedale who always seems sad. The Bosun is a Yorkshire terrier who orders everyone around, and our favourite, Rebel, is a Labrador who lives up to his name.—R. HAYLOX, Glen Esk, Whitby.

The "Digby" Touch

THE brilliant serial, *Digby*, by D. H. Walker, reminded me of the author's own energetic and sporting manner. He was a popular lieutenant in the Black Watch during the war, and I was detailed by him to check signal equipment in the Alipore Regiment stores. When we had finished, the Indian signal havildar who was helping me produced three bottles of beer and insisted that they were for me. In the midday heat, the beer made me slightly tipsy. I appreciated "Hooky" Walker's tact in not noticing my condition when he returned. — W. MCRAE, Balmerino Road, Dundee, Angus.

Taxicab Canvas

AT least one of London's old taxicabs has taken on new life—and colour. I saw it the other day in Chelsea, and managed to take a photograph. The mudguards and bonnet are painted in a pink quilted



pattern; the body has grey panels, framed in yellow, with green drapes. The rear doors bear a portrait of Robert Walpole, the famous Prime Minister.—R. D. BARRETT-LENNARD, Lowndes Square, London, S.W.1.

"I bought this taxi for about £60," says Roy Alderson, the owner. "I'm a mural artist, and I thought I would make the old bus look a bit different. It took me about three months to decorate it, in between painting murals in Venice, Rome and London. I own an antique shop called 'Horace Walpole,' so I put a portrait of his more famous father on, too."

Letters intended for publication should be as brief as possible and include the sender's full name and address. John Bull pays a guinea for every letter printed. Readers with personal problems should send inquiries (other than medical) to John Bull Free Advice Service, with a stamped addressed envelope for reply.

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Alec climbed into the bucket: the rope began to unwind him down into the mine shaft. Maggie was horrified, but the boys watched in fascination

Beginning this week—a moving and powerful story of gold-lust

El Dorado

by ***DORIS LESSING***

ILLUSTRATED BY K. J. PETTS

HUNDREDS OF MILES south were the gold-bearing reefs of Johannesburg; hundreds of miles north, the rich copper mines. These, the two lodestars of the great central plateau, these the magnets which drew men, white and black, drew money from the world's counting-houses; concentrated streets, shops, gardens; attracted riches and poverty and misery. But this, here, was true farming land, a pocket of good dark rich soil in the wastes of the light sandveld.

When Alec Barnes came searching for a farm, he chose the rich maize soil, though cleverer, experienced men told him the big money was to be found only in tobacco. To Alec, tobacco seemed a nervous, unsatisfactory crop, geared to centres in London and New York. His aim was not money, but a good wholesome life. There were many ways of looking at this new country, so fertile for tobacco, so spattered with gold deposits. Alec Barnes chose to look at it with the eye of the farmer, the food producer.

He bought a small farm, about two thousand

A TWO-PART STORY

acres, from a man who had gone bankrupt; so there was a house already built. It was a pleasant house, in the style of the country, of light red brick, with a corrugated iron roof, big bare rooms and a wide veranda. The rainy season had sprung new grass, high and thick, over paths, over flower beds. When the Barnes family came in, they had to send a native ahead with a scythe, to cut an opening in the thickets of the growth; and in the front room, the bricks of the floor were being tumbled aside by the shoots from old tree-roots.

There was a great deal to do, before the

place would be comfortable, and Maggie Barnes set herself to work. She was the daughter of a small Glasgow shopkeeper, but her grandparents had farmed. She remembered visiting the old people, as a child; playing with a shaggy old cart-horse, feeding the chickens. That way of farming could hardly be compared to this. Here there was no domesticated cart-horse to take sugar from her hand; only teams of sharp-horned and wild-eyed oxen. But there were chickens and turkeys and geese; in a sense it was a coming home, a return. The very air was full of promise.

They would "get on," she and her husband. They would be prosperous, as the established farmers round them were prosperous. It was true that when the neighbours made doubtful faces at their growing small-scale maize, she felt a little troubled. But she approved her husband's choice, the growing of food satisfied her ideas of what was right, and connected with her religious and respectable grandparents.

She would say, in her bluff, affectionate way, of Alec: "He's a queer man; being English, I canna get used to the way of him!" But she said it proudly, being happy with him, and with her two sons, who were still small children.

She sent them out with the native servant to play in the veld, saying "Out of my way, nuisances, and *that* you are!" Then she went back to work, white-washing the house, even climbing the roof herself, to see to the guttering.

The boys learned a new way of playing. They spread themselves, ranging over the fields, so that the native youth who had care of them found himself kept running. They made dams in the mud of the fields, plunged fearfully with the plough behind the oxen, rode high on the sacks of the wagons. They lost the pretty sheltered look of the child from "home," who must be nervous of streets and traffic, always conscious of the pressure of the neighbours. They grew fast and tall, big-boned and muscular, lean and burnt.

MAGGIE would sometimes say, with that good-natured laugh, "Well, and I don't know myself with these change-children!" She herself was that Scots type, rather short and finely made, even fragile, with the great blue eyes and easily freckling fair skin and mass of rough black curls. She looked at her children in the bath, showing smooth dark-brown all over, save for the tender milky skin like a loin-cloth where the strong khaki shorts kept the sun off, and felt perturbed, as if in some way they were most flagrantly betraying her by growing so, away from the fair, clear, open looks of their good Scots ancestors.

At seven and eight, Paul and Dan were quite independent, had thrown off the attendant "boy"; would spend all day in the fields, coming in for meals as if—so Maggie complained in that soft, pretty Scots voice—"As if I'm no better than a restaurant."

But in time she grew to accept the easy atmosphere of the country, and the alien behaviour of her children, even if, in her heart, she was determined they would not grow up that way, lax and happy-go-lucky. Soon they would be going to school in town, and they would "have it knocked out of them." She had a sturdy Scots attitude towards education. She expected them to work and win scholarships.

When she spoke to Alec, he seemed to turn against her, not noisily, in a healthy and understandable quarrel, but in a stubborn, silent way. Surely he wanted them to grow up into something, to make something of themselves? she demanded. Put like that, of course, he assented; but vaguely. It was this vagueness that upset Maggie, for there was no way of answering it. When she said: "It's time we put them to school," he replied: "There's time enough, next year."

HE took the boys with him in the fields. They strayed away from him while he stood watching the labourers, and came running back for drinks of tepid sweetened tea from his bottle, or if there was a chance of a ride on the wagon.

He did not mind if they vanished for half the morning. He would only say to them: "Well, old chap? Find something interesting?" He put no pressure on them; but their mother was always questioning, trying to find out.

Alec had been a clerk in a bank till the first world war. After the upheaval, he could not go back to an office. He married Maggie and threw up everything and came to this new country. There were farmers in his family too, a long way back, though he had only come to remember this when he felt a need to explain, even excuse, that dissident streak which had made a conventional life impossible.

He grew more vague, more abstracted, as the years went by. He would stand on a moonlight night staring across the fields, which appeared now like a dimly-green sea, the white crests of the maize shifting like foam; or at midday, looking over the stretching acres of brown and heaving clods, or at a sunset, when the miles of bush flared gold and red.

Distance, that was what he needed.

He cleared new ground every year. When he first came, it was mostly bush, with a few cleared patches. The house was bedded in trees. Now one walked from the house through Maggie's pretty garden, and the mealies stood like a green wall on three sides of the homestead. From a little hillock behind the house, the swaying green showed solid and unbroken, hundreds of acres of it, beautiful to look at, but—the experts were warning against this kind of planting. Better small fields with trees to guard them from the wind, better girdles of grass, so that the precious soil might not wash away with the flooding storm-waters.

But Alec's instinct was for space, and soon half the surface of the farm was exposed. The ploughs drove a straight line from boundary to boundary, and the labourers worked in a straight line, like an advancing army, their hoes rising and falling over their heads.

Alec sent gangs of workers into the trees, and through the slow season the dull *thud-thud* of axes sounded across the wide clean air, and the trees crashed one after another into the wreckage of their branches. Always a new field, or rather the old one extended, always fine new soil ready to be bared for planting.

But there came a time when it was not possible to cut more trees. The cattle had to graze. There must be sufficient veld left to feed them, for without them the ploughs and the wagons could not move, and there wasn't sufficient capital for a tractor. So Alec rested on his laurels for a couple of years, working the great field.

It was their most prosperous time; and Maggie sent Paul and Dan off to school in town. They would return only for their holidays—would return, she hoped, brisker, with purpose, the languor of the farm driven out of them.

She missed them badly, but it was a relief that they were in town, with other children.

As for Alec, their going made him uneasy. Now they were actually at school, he had to face their future and his responsibility. He wandered over his farm rather less vaguely, worrying what the boys were best for.

Paul, the older boy, was like himself, a long, dark, silent child, with his own dark eyes and slow way of speaking. The boy was deeply attached to his mother. Oddly enough, the younger, Dan, who had the open humorous face of his mother, and the frank blue eyes, was

Without a word, Maggie slipped her wedding

DORIS LESSING, thirty-four year old author of *El Dorado*, came to London from Rhodesia four years ago with her baby son Peter, £20 and the script of a novel. Her marriage had failed. She had tried various jobs, but none satisfied her. She was a born writer, and knew it.

But she knew, too, that she couldn't live by her writing—yet. So she took an office job. Getting up at six, she fed Peter, took him to a crèche, then put in an hour or two's writing before leaving for the office.

Now a widely acclaimed novelist, Doris Lessing still has to sandwich her writing between her chores as mother and housewife.

All her best-known work is set in South Africa, and *El Dorado* is based on her childhood memories of the farm in Rhodesia where she grew up.

ring off her finger. As far as she was concerned, it was a moment of spiritual divorce. But Alec was utterly absorbed: he noticed nothing wrong

closer to his father. Decent boys, he thought, who belonged to the land. Yet here was Maggie, with great plans for them, determined they must be engineers, scientists, doctors, and nothing less than famous. Education, training, the need for money again. . . .

Perhaps he could lease adjoining land, and graze his beasts there, and leave his own good land free for tree-cutting? But he knew quite well that what was really needed to make the farm pay was a change in his way of farming. The experts were right; he was squandering soil. He spent some months thinking about it. There was a curious reluctance in him. The fact was, though he did not admit it for a moment, he was bored. Whatever he did with his land, there would be nothing *new* about it.

To postpone the problem, he cut another small area of trees, more as a gesture than as a practical way of increasing his income. And the cutting of them exposed all the ground as far as the ridge. Now they could see clear from the house across the *vlei* and up the other side: all the mealies, all a shimmering mass of green, and on the ridge was the boundary of the next farm, and against the boundary there was something else. Something that Alec did not want to see.

It was a gold mine. Nothing very grand, a two-stamp affair, with a couple of hard-working men, brothers, getting what gold they could from a moderate but steady seam.

The mine had been there for years. Alec knew the miners slightly; they were brothers, James and Fred Ericson, who sometimes dropped over for a chat. The mine-stamps thudded day and night, coming loud or soft according to the direction of the wind. But to Alec there was something new and even awful about actually *seeing* the black and ugly straggle of the mine buildings, seeing the black smoke drifting into the blue sky.

From that cluster of black ugliness, gold was coming from the earth. Alec felt bitter about it. This was farming land. It was outrageous that the good soil should be covered, even for a mere five acres or so, by buildings and iron gear, and the sordid mine compound.

When the children came home, as usual, for their holidays, and saw the mine lifted black before them on the long green ridge, they were excited, and made their longest journey afield. They spent a day at the mine, and came home

Continued on page 32

Secretary of the Braemar Royal Highland Society, Joseph Grant. The Games he runs have now become a part of Scottish history

Veteran George Clark tosses the caber. He once astonished the gathering by throwing a nineteen-foot trunk weighing 121 pounds

Kilts fly in the wrestling contest. One way is to swing an opponent round by the heels till he's dizzy—then throw him away

Joseph Grant gathers the clans for the Royal Games

by RONALD W. CLARK

All year long he's setting the arena. Then, in one brief day of pageantry, the hills of Braemar ring to the skirl of pipes as Scots flex their muscles in tests of strength and skill

ONE DAY IN MARCH, 1952, a sturdy Highlander with shaggy eyebrows and a leathery face left the garage he runs in the village of Braemar, a thousand feet up in the Cairngorm Hills, and set off to keep an appointment five hundred miles away at Buckingham Palace.

For some time, villagers had argued whether it would be right to hold the Royal Highland Games that summer, in view of the recent death of King George VI. Now, as secretary of the society organizing the famous event, Joseph Grant was going to find out from the Queen herself.

Grant was asked to see that the Games went on, and he returned to Scotland to take up the arrangements where he had left off. As planner and trouble-shooter of the annual gathering, which falls this year on September 3, Grant has an all-the-year-round task which is dissipated in one day of skirling pipes, Highland dancing, wrestling, putting the shot and tossing the caber.

Traditionally attended by the Royal Family, the Games nowadays bring about forty thousand visitors from all over the world into Braemar. The six hundred inhabitants barely have room to move for motor cars and coaches, and the village constable is reinforced from other parts of Aberdeenshire. Clansmen march round a hundred-yard arena to the cheers of spectators spread out against a background of mountains. Most of the Scots wear tartans.

"It's a part of modern Scottish history," says one of Grant's supporters. "But though the Games are hotly fought out, the whole thing owes more to mutual aid than competition."

Cleared Land With Bull-dozers

The Braemar Royal Highland Society was formed 136 years ago to raise a fund for the relief of members during sickness, to defray their funeral expenses and to provide annuities for widows and orphans, and superannuation for the longer-lived members. "We still do the job to this day," says Grant.

The gathering itself is no money-spinner, he says. The costs of putting on the show are high. Once, the local constabulary telephoned Grant urging him to find parking-space for a thousand buses; he got a firm of contractors to clear the necessary land with bull-dozers. On another occasion a car park was prepared on the far side of Clunie Water, the local river. To avoid congesting the village street with thousands of people going to and from their cars, the society had to build a bridge. "It cost us £400," says Grant ruefully.

Last year, admission fees to the Games reached almost £5,000. Of this, £500 went in entertainment tax—a debit item which, according to one Braemar inhabitant, everyone resents. It cost £325 to hire pipe bands, and £63 4s. for the extra police. More than £500 went in prizes, but other awards were presented by Scottish organizations and exiled Scots.

Early this year, a two-foot silver challenge shield for piping was offered by the Highland Piping and Dancing Society of Invercargill, New Zealand. Grant was notified by the Customs authorities in Scotland that there was duty of £32 10s. to pay on it. He got in touch with the donors and then argued it out with the authorities. "I had a good case," he explains. "I told them we might get the New Zealand Prime Minister to bring it in on his way to London. It was then that they gave in."

Games Run By Local People

An accomplished "fixer," Grant in fact works through a committee of Braemar people, each of whom takes responsibility for one or more events at the Games. Among the 120 members is the local jeweller, William Randle, and a retired tailor, a bus conductor, a gamekeeper and a taxi-driver. The heavy events—tossing the caber, putting the weight and shot, and throwing the hammer—are run by a distillery worker named Norman Boyne.

For the fifty-odd events Grant usually hires twelve judges. He also engages the payroll stewards, contractors for the erection of stands, experts in flower-decoration, and strong-armed men for such jobs as carrying the caber into position for the contest. "It takes two men to carry what one man has to throw," says Grant.

Caber-tossing is one of the more spectacular items. Two years ago a veteran competitor called George Clark, a giant who was winning events in the Highland Games in the early 1920s, and who today ranks as the greatest heavyweight in the field, astonished Grant and forty thousand other witnesses by tossing the untossable caber. The tree trunk, nineteen feet seven inches long and weighing 121 pounds—it was cut from the Mar Estate at Braemar in 1906—was held upright by two of Boyne's assistants, and Clark then took it at waist height, using his chest as a buttress.

By repute, it had been tossed once before by a powerful Scot, A. A. Cameron, of Spean Bridge—but only in an exhibition demonstration before the first World War. Nobody had

Sword dancing against a background of mountains. To prevent any charges of favouritism, judges must not sit together—or even speak to each other

succeeded in tossing it at the Games. Clark took a deep breath, his muscles bulged—and the caber began its flight. It rose—but not high enough. According to the rules, which are strictly enforced, it should travel enough to allow the top end to describe a perfect half-circle as the lower end swings to the top. Finally, the caber should lie facing the competitor.

Again Clark tried—and just failed. The last of his three throws, however, succeeded. Clark was called to the Royal Enclosure to be congratulated by King George VI. He also won a special prize of £10 for the feat—the only time it has been paid out.

Clark also has a reputation in the wrestling events. One of his methods, which he calls the Highland fling, involves lifting his opponent by the heels, swinging him round until he is dizzy and then tossing him to the side of the ring—and sometimes out of it. Muscular treats like this, though, are common in the Games. One recent competitor, a gillie, is reputed to have got into the habit of taking the load off his pack-horses by carrying fully-grown stags down from the hills on his back.

A Prize For Long Service

Less muscular people can also win prizes. Besides athletic events—a three hundred yard hurdles race is being reintroduced this year—there are competitions for length of service with one employer. Last year there was a tie in this event between the Queen's Piper at Balmoral Castle, Robert Nicol, and a gillie on the neighbouring Invercauld Estate. Both had twenty-eight years' service.

Events are divided into three groups—those in which only the Braemar Royal Highland Society members can compete; local contests for men and women who have lived six months or more in the parishes of Glenmuick, Tullich and Clencairn, or Crathie and Braemar; and those open to all comers. Four cash prizes are awarded for each event, ranging from £6 for a first in the open piping contest to 7s. 6d. for a fourth in several junior competitions. Record breakers in any of a list of events, including the long leap, get an additional £2.

Can Enter On The Spot

Usually, the Games start at nine o'clock in the morning and go on until evening. Entries are accepted on the spot, without notice, and several events take place in the arena simultaneously. "But when the caber is being tossed," says one of Grant's aides, "it's wise to keep clear."

Competitive dancing also goes on for most of the day. To prevent any suspicion of favouritism, judges are not allowed to sit together or to speak to each other. They give points for position, deportment, timing and execution—and then hand their totals to the adjudicators.

Partisanship runs high. Competitors usually have big followings from their own villages among the crowds, which pack every square foot of ground overlooking the arena. No insurance is taken out against accidents—or the weather. Even during rainstorms the Games continue. At the 1947 meeting it poured from start to finish, and on one occasion there was flooding. "There was a foot of water at the entrance," Grant tells, "and many people came in gumboots. The caber made a mighty splash when it landed."

But Grant worries less about the weather than about protocol. Though there are twenty-odd Highland gatherings annually in Scotland, only Braemar can use the prefix "Royal"—and this brings its own complications.

Once, Grant had to decide whether the Royal Standard flown on the pavilion occupied by the Royal visitors should have English or Scottish quarterings. On the Scottish flag, two quarters are each filled with a Scottish lion and a third with three English lions. The fourth contains an Irish harp. On the English flag two quarters have the English lions and only one contains the Scottish lion. Grant was in two minds for a time, but finally had the English flag run up.

He had an even quicker decision to make when it was decided some years ago to play the National Anthem at the gathering. By tradition, only pipe bands are used—and a pipe-major explained at the last moment that some tunes could not be played on the pipes. The National Anthem, he added, was among them. Grant sent an assistant to buy a record and had it played over the public address system.

March That Stirs The Scots

One of Grant's biggest tasks is also musical—the preparation of a march of massed pipe bands as a play-in to the gathering. A contest was organized a few years ago to find a suitable introductory composition. Among the 286 entries was one from the son of the late Pipe-Major George MacLennan, of the Gordon Highlanders. It was originally composed by the pipe-major for the anticipated march into Berlin by the Gordons at the end of the first World War.

According to one of Grant's colleagues, it has stirring effects on the Scots at the Games. One spectator was so moved two years ago that he came out from the crowd and tried to enter one of the sprints. Officials did all they could to dissuade him—without success. He was then escorted to a committee tent, where Grant calmed him down. "I like to see people having a try," he explains. "But this fellow was more than seventy years old." THE END

THE KILLER IN FLAT TEN

by MARK DERBY

ILLUSTRATED BY CRITCHLOW

He meant to murder everyone who was in the car that night; Martha knew that. Three were already dead. That left only one—herself

A sudden, brilliant flash of lightning lit up the flat. In that moment, Martha saw the shadow

FOR A MOMENT there was silence while the smart Malay constable went out and closed the door and the police lieutenant directed a glance of inquiry across his desk. Then Martha said, "I believe I'm going to be murdered."

With her great eyes wide and a strand of her hair drawn up into the slipstream of the big ceiling fan, she didn't look altogether real. She was afraid that to the young police officer she might not look, or sound, altogether sane.

He said, a little stiff and aloof in his smart tropical uniform, "Sit down, and tell me what it is we can do for you."

Martha's slim body was stiff in the rattan chair for a moment; then she relaxed. But consciously. She relaxed with an effort, and the effort was more obvious than the relaxation. "Over and over again I've told myself that I must be imagining things, that I'm new to Singapore, new to the East and . . . and lonely this past month."

"You don't know anybody here?"

"Only Davy's friends. And now they. . . ."

She sighed and started again. "Davy Hunter is my fiancé. I came out five weeks ago to marry him, but he had to go off and fix some trouble on one of his company's estates in Sumatra. He comes back tomorrow, and we were going to be married the day after."

"But not now?" He blinked uncertainly.

"No," she said quietly. "I'm afraid I'll be dead before then."

He blinked again and threw a glance back at the racquet and white shoes in the corner behind his desk and another out through the window at the black monsoon that had been piling up for an hour.

Martha realized that her entrance just before he was due to leave his office might have lost him his game that evening. She made an effort to be brief.

"You asked about my friends here. Well, you'll know about them already, I expect."

He said, "I don't know anything. I only came back off leave yesterday."

"But you saw *that*." She was pointing to a headline on the front page of the *Straits Times* on his desk: POLICE SEARCH FOR MISSING OFFICER.

He frowned at the news story for a moment and then said, "You have some information for us about Commander Milne—is that it?"

"I only know he's dead," she said. "Murdered. I don't know where you'll find his body. Perhaps you won't."

With a glance of resignation towards his

Into the glare of the headlights a figure suddenly appeared, running. Andrew tried to swerve, but it was too late. She ran straight into them

racquet and white shoes the lieutenant said, "Try and tell me about it, will you?"

"The only friends I had in Singapore," she began again, "took me to a party three weeks ago. Andrew Carson and Rob and Rosemary Milne. It was somewhere beyond Johore Bahru at a planter's bungalow, a sort of farewell party to Andrew Carson, who was sailing for home next day. We drove back across the Causeway not long past midnight and turned up the road to the Milne's bungalow. And half-way along the road it happened."

A sentry marched past the window, his proud Malay profile dark against the glare of the sinking sun.

"A girl dashed across the road under our wheels. Just as if she'd never heard the car or seen the lights. Andrew swerved, and we all fell sideways, and then he stopped and he went back with Rob. They could see nobody and we drove on. Next day in the papers we saw that an Indian girl named Lakshami had been injured when a car ran her down along that road soon after midnight and had died before morning. The police were asking the driver to come forward."

She paused. The lieutenant's eyes made no response to the tension in hers, and she went on: "That evening Andrew asked us all to his hotel and told us he'd decided not to go to the police unless we insisted. Why? Well, he'd just finished three years of dodging terrorist ambushes, and fighting Communist bandits on a rubber estate in Selangor. His boat was sailing next day, and if he missed it while the police completed their inquiries and the inquest was held he wouldn't get another booking for weeks.

"He was a sick man, and the doctors who'd ordered him home wouldn't let him fly. So we agreed to keep quiet. As Andrew said, how would coming forward have helped anybody?

"And it was the girl's own fault, definitely. She just didn't give him a chance; she ran out of the trees in front of us like a mad thing."

Martha closed her eyes. "I can see her now. . . . A beautiful face, with hair blacker than darkness and a gold skin and a gold *sari* and the most amazing eyes. I only saw her for a split second, but I'll remember her as long as I live."

Her hands went suddenly rigid. *As long as I live.* The echo of her own words had scared her. Then she made the deliberate effort again, and her hands relaxed.

"So Andrew embarked on the Chusan next morning. But that was as far as he got. He was taken ill suddenly while we saw him off and died in the ambulance that came to take him to the hospital. Some sort of food poisoning."

He only nodded to her to go on.

"Death by misadventure, they said. And they said it again the week after, when Rosemary Milne was drowned in her own swimming pool. Perfect health, no sign of a struggle, but drowned in five feet of water, while her husband wrote letters twenty yards away.

"There was a gardenia hedge between him and the pool, so Rob didn't see the murderer creeping up while Rosemary drowsed on the water, the way she always did, and seizing her ankles and pulling her silently under."

Her eyes challenged the unbelief in his.

"So that's how I know Rob Milne is dead. He's been murdered. By the man who murdered Andrew and Rosemary. The man who's going to murder me."

"You mean, the husband of the Indian girl who was killed?"

"Yes." She added: "He'd only been married to her two days. His name is Daya Ram."

But he didn't even write down the name of the man who was going to murder her. Instead, he found a formula that would get her off his hands. He gave her the name and address of a senior officer. "He's the man you want to see. He'll know all about your case."

Just as she'd told herself a hundred times, the police wouldn't believe her. By the time she was outside, down on the hot pavement again, she had forgotten the senior officer's name. . . .

Her flat was unbearable, the flat that was to have been home for Davy and her. One glance round the living-room was enough to assure her that she could not spend that night there. She moved straight from the door to the telephone, called the Raffles Hotel and asked for a single room. For one night.

But the Raffles was fully booked. So were the only other hotels she knew of. Panic strode near, but inspiration came suddenly. She called the Tanjong Ru Nursing Home and asked for Jean Sanderson. They put her through at once.

Martha pictured Jean in bed, surrounded by flowers and books and the white phone and piles of letters from friends, not really ill but loving the ease of the fashionable nursing home after a month of non-stop parties celebrating her return from England.

After Jean had replied at length to her opening inquiry, Martha asked, "Jean, I want to stay there, too. Can I come tonight?"

"*Dar*ling, I thought you sounded rather *diminuendo*," Jean exclaimed. "But there's not a hope. This place is always booked up weeks ahead. I only got in because four patients died in a row." She added, "But no chance of anybody dying tonight, I'm afraid."

Martha closed her eyes and shivered, despite the choking heat of the gathering storm. It hadn't broken yet and the piled-up suspense of the swollen clouds hanging in the darkness above the island was grimly oppressive.

The next moment she suddenly started telling Jean everything. Loneliness and fading courage had sprung the impulse on her, but the long silence as she came to a breathless finish told her she was going to regret it. "But *dar*ling!" Jean cried out at last. "Oh, of course it was terrible for you, losing two friends in tragic accidents one after the other, but if you let it

prey on your mind like this you'll end up by taking these gruesome nightmares seriously. Really, you mustn't."

Martha didn't protest. Somehow she had half known that Jean wouldn't be convinced, any more than the police officer had been. "But I can't stay here, Jean," she declared unsteadily. "The hotels are all full, and now I've no friends left. Only you."

Hesitantly, Jean said, "There's my flat, darling, in Snowden Court. You're welcome to go there, if it helps at all."

"Oh, yes!" Martha snatched at the offer. "May I, tonight? Now?"

"It'll be horribly cheerless," Jean warned.

"It'll be wonderful!" Martha cut in. "Number ten, Snowden House, isn't it, and I take a taxi to Mowbray Road."

"Get the key from the caretaker," Jean said, "and if you find your avenging bridegroom lying in wait behind the kitchen door, be sure to call me up and say goodbye before he gets down to the strangling!"

With a breathless feeling of relief, Martha rang off, ordered a taxi, collected a few night things and Davy's photo from her bedroom and fled.

For the next half-hour she methodically covered up her trail, using four taxis, side-tracking and back-tracking like a hunted fox. When finally she let herself into Jean's fourth-floor flat, she slammed the door and leaned against it in the darkness, her heart racing, her limbs trembling in the relief of escape.

For the night she was safe. Nobody could possibly have tracked her through the web she had spun. And even if her enemy were a yard behind her, the lock and bolt on the stout door would save her. The sheer drop below the windows would defeat anything without wings.

For tonight she was safe and tomorrow Davy would be back. Like a prisoner reprieved on the scaffold, she whispered a small prayer of thankfulness and then her hand found the light switch and flicked it down.

Nothing happened.

She tensed again in the dark room but realized almost at once that the electricity would have been turned off at the main switch when Jean left for the nursing home. That didn't entirely relax her tension, though. Groping for the master switch in the back quarters of the unfamiliar flat was something her body refused to attempt until she had gathered all her resolution. And then, just as she took a step forward, the storm at last opened its preliminary bombardment.

THERE was a blinding flash, followed almost immediately by a clap of thunder like a planet exploding. But it was neither the flash nor the thunderclap that sent her reeling back against the door again. It was the shadow she had glimpsed in the dark cave beyond the open kitchen door!

She felt safety snatched from her, like a fur coat snatched from naked shoulders in a blizzard. She didn't know if what she had seen was real or imaginary; she only knew she hadn't nerve enough to go into that kitchen.

There was a second lightning flash and it showed her that the dark space beyond the kitchen door was empty. So it had been imagination. But her sigh of relief was interrupted by something that hurled her back into terror again.

The big white electric lamp over her head flashed on.

In the same moment the storm burst like a gigantic hose turned on the building. She stood blinking in the sudden light, realizing that somebody must have thrown the master switch in the kitchen, and then he appeared in the doorway.

The picture of him she had built up in her mind had been uncannily true. Those fine eyes, shadowed with suffering and lighted with crazy hatred, were not the eyes of a stranger. The handsome face, brown under the rich black hair, was one she had glimpsed in a hundred waking nightmares. Even his voice, raised above the roar of the deluge, was like a remembered voice.

"We will go into that room, Miss Langley."

The revolver in his right hand gestured towards the sitting-room door. She obeyed like a woman walking in her sleep. In the long sitting-room she took a chair he indicated, and faced him across a small table on which stood a vase of dead spider lilies and the skeleton key he must have used to get in.

He looked at her, like a man face to face with Destiny, and said nothing.

"Daya Ram?"

It was no question, really, and needed no answer. He only said, "You understand, then?"

She nodded slowly. She did understand.

He said, "I spent this afternoon in your flat, Miss Langley. I intended to have our little talk there, but when I heard you arranging with a friend to spend the night here I decided to come over and wait for you. Here we can be sure of not being disturbed."

"Disturbed?"

"If we are disturbed I shall have to cut our interview short." Breaking the revolver, he showed her two of the six chambers loaded. He looked down at the brass bases of the two bullets as if they were jewels and murmured dreamily, "One for you and then the other for me." After he'd closed the weapon again he said, "But first I want to talk to you."

"And I want to talk to *you*," Martha managed to say clearly. "You have murdered three friends of mine and now you want to murder me. What do you get out of it all?"

"Leave to die," he answered quietly, the liquid accent in his dreamy voice making the words sound like a line from a poem. "Leave to die."

The roaring madness of the storm outside almost drowned the quiet madness of his words. She found herself shaking her head and sighing, "None of them believed me."

"The police?" His full lips were contemptuous. "The police never helped me to find my wife's murderer, and today, when you went to them, you found they would not help you. I'll tell you why. They thought you were mad. They thought I was mad, too."

SHE shivered, but nerved herself to say, "Why do you call me and my friends murderers? You know that isn't true."

He said in his faraway voice, "I know my Lakshami is in her grave and I know who was responsible."

"She was responsible herself," Martha protested. "She ran out right under our wheels."

He nodded. "She was crazy with fear. An animal had attacked her in the darkness, a vile beast who had long desired her and hated her for her marriage to me. She escaped from him on to that road."

"Then isn't *he* your enemy? Isn't *he* responsible? If you must have revenge, why not on him?"

A naked light flashed in the fine eyes as he answered her. "He was the first——"

"Mr. Carson was driving carefully. He tried to avoid her, but there wasn't time. How can you blame us?"

"I only know"—the soft voice lifted a little above the growl of thunder—"I only know that I was the happiest man in the world and that now I am the unhappiest, and you and your friends are why."

She was silent. He was so far beyond any reasoning she could advance. He had made a vow to wipe out those he judged responsible for the death of his bride and then he would kill himself. Already there was a sort of exaltation about him; the longed-for moment of release from life was so close. Within ten minutes now she would be dead and he, released from his vow, would have leave to die at last.

When the telephone bell cut suddenly through

Continued on page 39

DEATH AND THE SKY ABOVE

NEXT WEEK JOHN BULL begins publication of a brilliant new novel of suspense. It is called *Death And The Sky Above*, by Andrew Garve, and it is the story of a man hounded for a murder he did not commit.

THE MAN is Charles Hilary, accused of strangling his dissolute wife, Louise, and his trial becomes a national sensation. For Kathryn Forrester, the girl he loves—and for whom he is supposed to have killed his wife—is a popular television interviewer. Their love story becomes a newspaper scandal. . . .

TO KATHRYN, it is unbelievable that anyone could think Charles guilty. But the unbelievable happens. At the Old Bailey, Hilary is sentenced to death.

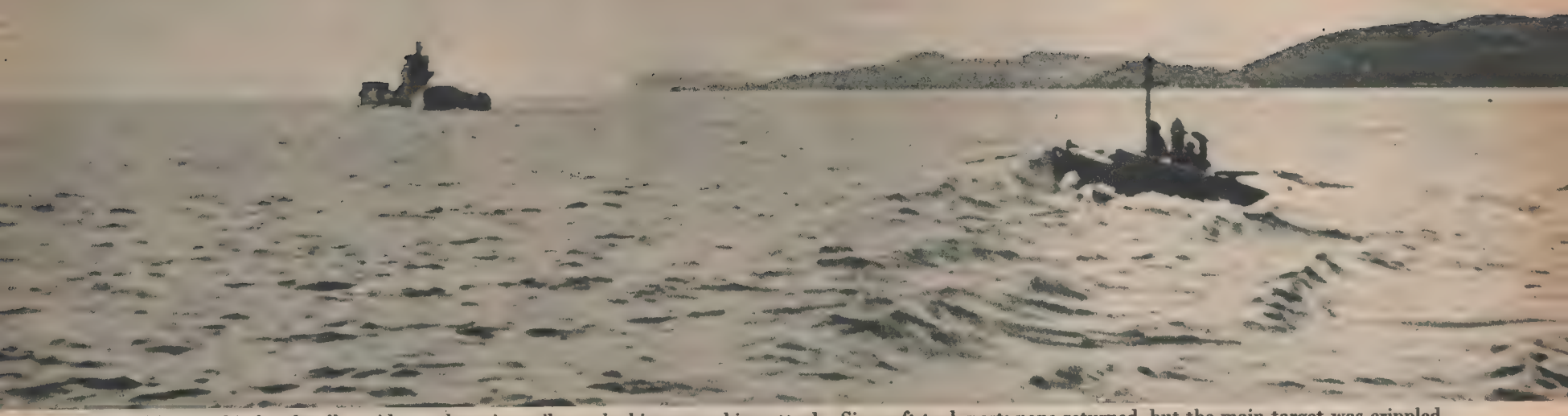
AND THEN, on the eve of his execution, a million-to-one chance comes off. Hilary escapes from prison and, helped by Kathryn, goes into hiding on the slimy mudflats of the Medway estuary. The great man-hunt begins—and with it, Hilary's grimmest ordeal.

THE MENTAL agony, the sheer animal terror of a man on the run, is brilliantly captured in scenes of almost unbearable tension. And, giving depth to the moving ordeal, is the tender love story of Hilary and Kathryn Forrester.

ANDREW GARVE, author of *Death And The Sky Above*, is the pseudonym of Paul Winterton, brilliant ex-foreign correspondent of the *News Chronicle*. The film *Never Let Me Go*, starring Clark Gable and Gene Tierney, was adapted from an earlier novel.

THE FIRST long instalment of *Death And The Sky Above*, illustrated in full colour by Fred Laurent, begins . . .

IN JOHN BULL NEXT WEEK



Towed by its "big brother," a midget submarine sails on the history-making attack. Six craft took part; none returned, but the main target was crippled

ABOVE US THE WAVES (6) by Charles Warren and James Benson

Our midgets smash into the lair of the Tirpitz

Crew of X7. Standing, left to right: Sub-Lieutenant Aitken (diver), Lieutenant Place (captain), Sub-Lieutenant Whittam (first lieutenant) and Lieutenant Philip (passage crew officer). Sitting: passage crew ratings Magennis and Luck, Engine Room Artificer Whitley (helmsman)

IF, ON A MORNING in mid-September, 1943, a reconnaissance aircraft had dived from the cloud that lay above the Arctic Ocean about 160 miles west of the Lofoten Islands, its pilot might have made the unusual sighting of a small craft, half submerged, nosing through the chop of a rising sea. Had he identified it for what it was—a British midget submarine, the X8—he might well have refused to believe his eyes and hesitated before sending his news back to base. Such a craft, in that place, at such a time—he could have been excused for thinking his report might be received with caution.

One man who would have heard his news gladly was only thirty miles away. He was Lieutenant J. P. H. Oakley, commanding the "big" submarine Seanymph, at that moment proceeding at almost full speed on the reciprocal of the course she had steered since leaving Scotland. Oakley was worried. For nearly a hundred hours he had towed the midget submarine behind him steadily, through all weathers and without accident. He had seen her surface at the agreed intervals, he had signalled her crew of three: everything had gone according to plan. Now his charge had vanished.

Some time shortly before dawn, as X8 was dragged through the water forty feet below the surface, the five-and-a-half-inch manilla rope had parted, casting off the "parent" from its "offspring." Alone, X8 was in peril, and powerless. Attached to Seanymph, she was a formidable weapon of war. The broken towline was the first of the many incidents that were to make Operation Source one of the most extraordinary exploits of the war at sea.

Operation Source had reached its climax on September 11, when a force of twelve submarines left the Shetlands for a 1,200-mile journey to the Norwegian Skerries, where three heavy units of the German fleet were sheltering in small, well-defended anchorages. The battleship Scharnhorst, the pocket battleship Lützow and, above all, the 40,000-ton Tirpitz, secure in their Arctic hideouts, were a static threat to

The target's hideout. An aerial photograph, taken before the attack, shows the battleship Tirpitz (circled) in her anchorage at Kaafjord

Close-up of the 40,000-ton warship taken by a German photographer. The rows of dots in the water are buoys supporting an anti-torpedo net

Kaafjord with Alten Fjord beyond. The midgets entered the narrow hideout from the left, after a hazardous sixty-mile run-in from the open sea

our convoys toiling up to the Russian White Sea ports. None of them had made a sortie for nine months, for they had no need to give battle. Their very presence in Norway was enough to condemn important elements of the Allied fleets to a frustrating and negative vigilance. The problem was how to destroy or cripple them in their iron lairs. If they would not come out, the navy decided, the navy would go in and get them. The weapon was to be the midget submarine.

Alten Fjord, where the Tirpitz and her sisters lay, was more than sixty miles from the open sea. The six miniature submersibles, to which the Admiralty had given the name of X-craft, were to be towed by full-sized submarines to within thirty miles of the entrance to the fjord. Then, cast off, the small craft were to make their own way through the narrow, tortuous channels and in to the anchorages. It was a plan that called for high daring and skill. The X-craft, each manned by a passage crew of three, were to surface for the final run-in and attack on the eighth day of the passage, when the operational crews would transfer from the towing submarines to their appointed midgets.

Training had been spread over seventeen months, the choice of personnel had been rigorous. It was forty-two highly efficient and very determined young men who put out into the North Sea on the evening of September 11, 1943. They were to make an attack whose nature had never been attempted before. They were to make history.

Crews Get Their Targets

They received their last briefing by radio from the Admiralty on the fifteenth. X-crafts 5, 6 and 7, towed by the submarines Thrasher, Truculent and Stubborn respectively, were to attack the Tirpitz. X8, in tow to Seanymph, was to take the Lützow. The Scharnhorst was allotted jointly to X9—attached to Syrtis—and X10, whose parent was Sceptre. With these instructions the briefing was complete. In the big submarines, as the operational crews spread out the charts and harbour plans, there was relief and mounting tension. It was as if the target had suddenly appeared in the sights. Nothing, they might have thought, could stop them now. ... .

When Lieutenant Jack Smart, commanding the passage crew in the submerged X8, felt the bows of his craft tilt downwards sharply, he knew at once what had happened—at some point the three hundred feet of rope that attached him to Seanymph had snapped. He immediately blew the main ballast tanks and surfaced. He clambered from the hatch on to the casing, expecting to sight the submarine less than a mile ahead. The sea was empty. Smart was perhaps nine hundred miles from his base, his crew numbered two. He decided, in spite of these considerations, to go on and make the attack alone. He checked his course and, at three knots, proceeded doggedly towards the north and his target.

Searched For Lost Boat

Meanwhile, aboard the submarine, nothing untoward had yet been noticed. It was not until two hours later, when the time came for X8 to surface according to routine, that Lieutenant Oakley realized that his charge was adrift. The position was serious, for the last time he had seen X8 was six hours before, when the midget had come up for air. The small boat might have been anything up to thirty-five sea miles astern. Oakley swung the submarine through 180 degrees and increased speed to retrace the previous night's track. He posted extra lookouts to search every segment

Striking a rock, the midget lurched to the top.

of sea. Six hours afterwards, when he was still without a sighting, something happened to make the situation grimmer: the latest log book entry marked the sea as "rough to very rough." For the first time since the force left Scotland the weather was taking a hand.

At that moment, a few miles away, the weather was making difficulties for Stubborn, towing X7. Stubborn's passage, indeed, was beginning to be the opposite of dull. Laconically, her log recorded the events:

1213	Submarine sighted, believed to be U-boat. Stubborn dived.
1223	Surfaced.
1550	Tow parted. X7 surfaced and auxiliary tow passed.
1700	Proceeded.
1718	Closed and joined by midget submarine X8. Proceeded in company to look for Seanymph.
1900	Dusk. Resumed course for Alten Fjord.
1954	Signal made to Admiral Submarines, to be passed to Seanymph.
2359	Contact lost with X8.

At midnight on the fifteenth, then, Lieutenant Smart in X8 was alone once more, and was to be so for another seventeen hours. After losing contact with Stubborn, X8 had steered a course south-east of 146 degrees. The course ordered, and misheard through the sound of wind and waves, had been 046—an error that had taken X8 far out of Stubborn's orbit when dawn broke on the sixteenth. But if Stubborn failed to sight

ILLUSTRATION BY EDWARD OSMOND

The mighty warship, towering above her, lay just ahead. This time there was no mistake. The Germans knew her for what she was and sprang into action

X8 at first light she did the next best thing when, at 3.15 a.m., she identified Seanymph on the port beam and gave her the latest information about the erring midget's position. However, it was not until late in the afternoon that Seanymph found X8 and the partnership was resumed.

Smart had been on his own in the small craft for thirty-seven nerve-wearing hours, during which period he had hardly been off his feet. At eight o'clock in the evening, the sea having abated, it was decided to relieve him and the two members of his passage crew. The operational crew put out from the submarine in a rubber dinghy and climbed aboard X8. In spite of the harassing time Smart and his men had been through, X8 was in excellent condition.

His Craft Was Doomed

The midget's new commander, Lieutenant B. M. McFarlane, Royal Australian Navy, saw the tow secured to Seanymph and settled in happily with his crew. He was not to know that his boat had but a few hours to live. Nor could he guess that disaster, complete and brutal, had already struck one of her sisters.

At nine o'clock that morning, six hours after Stubborn had told Seanymph of X8's sighting, Lieutenant M. H. Jupp, commanding Syrtis, realized that it was time to bring his charge, X9, to the surface for the routine fifteen minutes of ventilation. His tow had so far been without incident and he had no forebodings when he gave the order for this to be done. The customary signal of three grenades—to make the necessary underwater explosion—was fired. There was no response. A little time was allowed, then Jupp had the tow hauled in; it had parted.

Syrtis immediately did what Seanymph had done the day before: the submarine turned and followed the reciprocal course, searching as she went. The search was as thorough as possible under the circumstances, but the sea gave up nothing—neither Syrtis nor any other craft ever saw X9 again. Hope was kept alive until the end of the war. There was always the chance that the passage commanding officer, Sub-Lieutenant Kearon, had reached the Norwegian coast, scuttled his craft and made his way ashore.

That hope was never realized. The only explanation was the worst: the small submarine, trimmed bow-heavy to counteract the upward pull from the towing Syrtis, must have been carried below the safety limit before Kearon and his men could take corrective action. Then the plates would buckle under pressure, the lethal sea would rush in, and all would soon be over. Kearon and his crew were the first operational casualties suffered by our midget submarines. The heavy bill for courage was being met.

The sea had swallowed X9; another but hardly less dangerous force was to destroy X8. This midget, as if the forty hours of hide-and-seek with Seanymph were not enough, began to give serious trouble on the morning of the seventeenth. Her first lieutenant, Jack Marsden, reported the craft very difficult to control. The trim, as he said, was "all to hell." Pumping had to be continuous and very large hydroplane angles were needed to maintain depth. Soon the main ballast tanks had to be used for trimming, a sign that something was seriously wrong.

A Surprise Explosion

About noon, they discovered the trouble: there was an air leak in the buoyancy chambers of the starboard side explosive charge—one of the two crescent-shaped containers carried outside the pressure hull, with whose two-ton charges of amatol the crew of X8 hoped to blast the Lützow out of the water. The midget, expertly handled, was kept going till 4.30 p.m., when she developed an alarming list to starboard. With the compensating tank now dry and the No. 2 main ballast fully blown, Lieutenant McFarlane decided to jettison the charge. It was set to "safe" and released in 180 fathoms of water. Fifteen minutes later, to everyone's surprise, it exploded a thousand yards astern with a very loud noise, but without doing any damage to either the midget or Seanymph.

The X8 had survived an unexpected menace, but McFarlane soon found that his troubles were far from over. Capriciously, the midget now began to list to port, showing that that side's

Continued on page 41

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A surgeon's knife cured my rheumatism

by ELSIE REDCLIFFE

The appalling stiffness in my hip had almost crippled me. Then I heard of a marvellous new operation. It meant weeks in hospital—and I had to learn to walk again. Today, I feel no pain

I HAD TO GO down into the cellar a few weeks ago and, when I turned to come back, I realized I had forgotten my stick. I called my husband, but when he asked where the stick was I realized I had forgotten that, too. "When did you last have it?" he asked. I couldn't remember. Finally, after hunting all over the house, he found it hanging over the sink, where I leave it when I'm washing up. He brought it down and I was able, without his help, to climb the steep cellar steps.

To me, the incident was significant because for a whole hour I had been moving about the house without support. It meant that two years' dependence on crutches and sticks was ending. For the surgeon who operated on me it meant that yet another arthroplasty could be counted as a complete success.

Before my operation, I was crippled with osteo-arthritis of the hip—one of the disorders which laymen loosely include in the term rheumatism. The specialist decided that the only way of alleviating my pain and enabling me to walk again was to refashion my hip joint and replace part of it with a plastic substitute. For the last two years I have been learning to live with my new joint. It has been two years of concentrated effort and rigorous exercise.

Until three years ago, I had never had an illness in my life. Our house is of the older type with eight large rooms as well as a cellar and an attic, and I had run it without help of any kind. At the same time, I had brought up four children, the youngest of whom, Muriel, is now nineteen.

Doctor Prescribed Bed

So, when I first felt a stiffness in my left hip, I treated it lightly. It happened that I was having pain in my right foot at the same time, and I went to see our family doctor. He diagnosed fibrositis—a fairly common form of rheumatism in my foot and treated it successfully. For the pain in my hip, he told me to have a week in bed. Unfortunately, this was impossible. My young grandson was himself in bed with whooping cough and I was helping to look after him.

The pain in my hip got worse and I began to have difficulty in moving about. I went back to my doctor. He prescribed some pills, a lotion, and something to make me sleep. They had no effect at all. The pain worsened and became permanent. I had practically no sleep at nights and, when I looked in the mirror, I found that my face was becoming pale and drawn. One day, I found that I could no longer bend to put on my shoes and stockings.

Luckily, I was still able to do the housework, though everything took longer than before. Whereas it had previously taken me only five minutes to tidy the fireplace, it now took me a quarter of an hour, and instead of finishing

Mrs. Redcliffe now leads a fairly active life. During the operation, the surgeon fitted her thigh bone with a new plastic head. Exercise has made it almost as good as the natural one

Arthroplasty patients may "cycle" for miles without moving an inch. The machine helps to strengthen those muscles affected by the operation

Another form of exercise. The patient moves her leg in a sprung sling. With the cycling patient above, she was operated on seven weeks before

my day's work around lunchtime, I was still at it when my husband came home in the evening. But I persevered. I had the feeling that if I stopped I should lose the use of my hip.

Again I went to the doctor. He suggested hot-water bottles, cushions when I lay down, and a week in bed. I should rest, he said, and take a holiday. But I couldn't rest. There was the house to look after and, though neighbours offered to help, I prefer to be independent.

The doctor also suggested that I should reduce my weight, which had risen from eleven stone seven to thirteen stone. The thyroid tablets and the starch-reduced diet he prescribed gradually brought it back to normal, and this was to stand me in good stead later.

Unfortunately, this failed to touch the root of the matter. The pain was appalling. Day and night it racked me, whether I was lying down, sitting or standing. Every day I was able to move slightly less than the day before.

Learned What Was Wrong

Once more I went to my doctor. This time he arranged an appointment with a specialist. The specialist was kind and considerate. After seeing an X-ray, he told me that I had osteo-arthritis. "I can't cure you," he said, "but I can ease your pain." He sent me to a local hospital for short-wave treatment three times a week for four weeks. Then I had four weeks' rest and started the treatment again. The treatment temporarily eased the pain, but it soon returned as severe as ever.

My visit to the specialist, however, had one result: I knew now what was wrong with me. The hip joint is what is commonly called a ball-and-socket joint, with the head of the thigh bone forming the ball, and a cavity in the pelvic girdle forming the socket. In osteoarthritis, the joint wears out. There is inflammation and the smooth surface of the socket (exactly similar to the shining pink of a knuckle bone you see in the butcher's) becomes pitted, rough and discoloured. No one knows the cause. It just seems to happen that some peoples' joints wear out more quickly.

As a result of the disease, bony growths gather round the joint, progressively impeding its action. They also press on the nerves and so produce the excruciating pain which kept me awake at night. Somewhat similar effects may be caused by severe rheumatism, by congenital malformation of the hips, or after an injury which has damaged the joint.

Filled With New Hope

Convinced that something more could be done for me, I talked to my doctor again, and he arranged an appointment with another specialist. After looking at X-rays, he confirmed the diagnosis of osteoarthritis, but, unlike his colleague, he held out hopes of a cure. There was a new operation, he told me, called an arthroplasty, in which the hip joint would be completely renewed. He would cut away the bony growths, smooth out the hip socket and replace the deformed head of my thigh bone with an artificial one made of a tough plastic.

"How do you feel about it?" he asked.

I asked if it would be effective.

"I can promise that your pain will disappear," he said, "and you'll probably get most of your movement back."

I was overjoyed. The prospect of getting rid of the pain alone made it worth while.

The specialist added: "The success of this operation depends mainly on yourself. When you leave hospital, you'll be given various exercises to do. You'll find them irksome, but, unless you work hard at them, you'll never get your movement back."

About two months later, I went into the Leeds General Infirmary. In the three days before my operation I had heart, lung and kidney tests. My blood group was ascertained because the operation involves a heavy loss of blood and I should need an almost continuous transfusion. I was glad now that I had reduced my weight. Otherwise, I should have spent some weeks in hospital on a diet.

Several other patients in my ward had had arthroplasties, and from them I was able to find out more about the operation. Once I was unconscious, the surgeon would make a long, deep cut along my thigh, expose the hip joint and dislocate it so that the ball would swing away from the socket. He would then, with hammer and chisel, chip away the bony growths, smooth out the socket and cut off the head of my thigh bone.

His next step would be to fit the plastic head, which looks like a tough transparent mushroom on a steel bar. To do so, the surgeon would drill a hole down the shaft of my thigh bone and hammer into it the stem of the mushroom. The dome of the mushroom would then take the place of the decapitated head of my own thigh-bone. With the cleaned-out socket, this would form a new joint which would function almost as well as the natural one.

The day before the operation, the anaesthetist came to check my heart and decide what anaesthetic to give me. That night, the nurse gave me tablets which ensured a good night's sleep, but I was awakened again at 4 a.m. and given another tablet. Three hours later, the nurse gave me an injection and I lost consciousness instantaneously.

"There's No Pain Now"

When I awoke, the first thing I saw was something red hanging over me. There were screens round my bed, and two nurses. I must have stirred uneasily, for one of them said: "Keep your arm still. You're having a blood transfusion." I realized then that the red object was an inverted bottle of blood.

I was sick and drowsy all that afternoon, but in the evening I brightened up for my husband's visit. "How do you feel?" he asked.

"There's no pain now," I said. It was enough. It was the justification.

For the next three weeks I lay flat on my back on a hard bed with my left leg in a splint. On my foot was what I can only describe as a wooden boot without the top. It was not a comfortable position, and I was not able to read. But the pain had gone and, after months of insomnia, I was able to sleep again. For that, I was tremendously thankful.

One morning, the physiotherapist came to see me. "It's time to start your exercises," she said. Besides regaining the use of my hip joint, I had to strengthen the large thigh muscles which had been cut in the operation.

Two metal castors were now fixed to the wooden boot underneath my heel and at right angles to my leg. Across the bottom of my bed a flat wooden board was placed, and on this the castors rested. Cords were attached to each side of the boot and arranged with pulleys so that their ends dangled over my bed. By pulling them, I could move my leg sideways across the "skating-board" and back again. A third cord enabled me to raise the whole leg.

Exercises Every Hour

The physiotherapist told me to pull the cord which would swing my leg outwards. The pain was excruciating, but it moved a few inches. "That's fine," she said. "Now I want you to do that five minutes in every hour from nine in the morning to five at night." She added that no one would be there to see that I carried out her instructions, but, unless I did so, I would never get the full movement back. "It all depends on you," she said.

I kept rigidly to the instructions, and at each attempt was able to move my leg a little farther than the time before. By the end of the week I was able to swing it several feet—almost as much as a person with a normal hip. The physiotherapist was delighted.

This was the first of many exercises I was taught to perform in bed. My splint was next

The physiotherapist shows a patient the way to recovery. Cords and pulleys move the leg in any direction. Patients are warned: "It's all up to you"

removed and a sling placed under my knee. The ends of this were attached to yet another contraption, so that by pulling on a fourth cord I could flex my knee. This, too, was painful at first, for the lack of movement during the last month had made it stiff. Meanwhile, to stimulate my thigh muscles, I was given electrical treatment each day.

Just as I was thinking that the physiotherapist had reached the limit of her ingenuity in devising exercises, she produced yet another. My feet and legs were placed in slings and I had to practise opening and closing them without help from the cords and castors.

After a full month on my back, the physiotherapist told me it was time for me to sit up. For the first day or two I did just that, with my feet over the side of the bed. I was very weak, and had "pins and needles" in my legs. After five minutes, it was a relief to be helped back into a lying position.

The next stage was learning to stand. Even with the aid of crutches I was able to manage only a few minutes. As I gradually gained strength, however, I started learning again how to walk. For this, there is a gadget called a "walking" chair, which consists of a three-wheeled stand with armrests. Somehow I managed to push it up and down the ward, but I felt as awkward as I imagine a child feels when he is taking his first few steps.

After a few days, however, I was strong enough to transfer to crutches, and even these were more difficult to master than I expected. To keep my balance, I had to move the left crutch forward at the same time as my right leg, and vice versa. With perseverance, I was eventually able to walk to the end of the corridor and back, a distance of about thirty yards. I was also taught to climb stairs on crutches.

Shortly afterwards, I was discharged. For the first few weeks I was terribly dependent on my family, since my hip movement was still very restricted.

Not that I was inactive. When I left hospital I had been handed a sheet of paper on which were set out twenty-six separate exercises which I was required to do each day.

Three times a week at first, then twice a week, an ambulance took me to the out-patients' department of the hospital, where I did yet more exercises—standing drill between parallel bars, "step-ups" at the wall-bars, and "cycling" on a stationary machine consisting of one wheel, a saddle and handlebars. After six months I regularly rode the equivalent of four and a half miles up a steep hill.

Big Thrill Of Success

Gradually the exercises had their effect and I began to resume my normal life. When I could stand up confidently without assistance I started to wash the breakfast dishes each morning. Soon afterwards I found I was able to sit at the kitchen table and prepare the food for lunch. What gave me the greatest thrill, however, was something which may appear trivial. Each morning, after dressing, I had sat on the edge of the bed, reached down and tried in vain to buckle my shoe. One morning, to my great joy, I succeeded. It was a significant step on the road to independence.

About a month after leaving hospital I took my first walk. It was only a few hundred yards along the road. I was escorted by Muriel, and a shopkeeper kindly allowed me to sit down for a few minutes before returning. But it gave me confidence. Next time I saw the specialist, he advised me to change my crutches for sticks.

One morning I was out walking when a woman stopped me. I guessed she was a neighbour, for though I had never spoken to her I had often seen her out. "I've been watching your progress," she said. I thanked her for her interest. "You know," she went on, "you're looking ten years younger." She was the first of many who told me the same thing. I had no difficulty in sleeping. I was free of pain and had a good appetite.

Today I live a pretty active life. I do all the shopping myself, all the washing—by hand—and I keep the whole house clean without outside help. I can climb the household steps, hang out washing and hook up curtains. I frequently make the train journey to Ripon to visit my elder daughter. This year I even went to the British Industries Fair at Castle Bromwich, where my elder son was exhibiting for his firm.

There are, of course, some things I cannot do. I used to enjoy gardening, but now the effort takes away the pleasure. Muriel has to carry heavy things upstairs for me and, on Monday, my husband brings down the linen basket. Also, I have the heavier goods delivered from the shops.

I believe that my success in recovering almost the full use of my hip is largely due to my insisting on doing everything possible myself. In the house, neither my husband nor Muriel dare offer to do anything; though well-meaning friends occasionally offer, I usually decline.

Independent Of Others

One thing annoys me more than anything. When, with great effort, I have reached down to pick up something I have dropped, it is peculiarly provoking to have someone swoop down and pluck it almost out of my grasp. Worst of all, I have to smile and say: "Thank you."

But this is a minor irritation. The main thing is that I am out of pain, that I can sleep, and that I can move about sufficiently freely to be independent of others. For some time now, I have been using one stick only and, at my last visit to the specialist, he told me I could put it aside when I felt I could do without it. That, I think, will be pretty soon. THE END

THE LONELY BANDIT

by CHRISTINE WESTON

ILLUSTRATED BY WILLIAM LITTLE

His men were dead or captured; he didn't know whom to trust. And now this dream had come to disturb him

PART'N DEEN the bandit awakened with his dream still sticking to his mind as certain particles stick to a man's fingers —as gold might stick, or blood or earth. The first thought that occurred to him was that he'd had this dream before, in other places besides this room—a room with a narrow window in one wall and a door opening into the courtyard of his host, the Khan.

He tried to hold on to his dream, for he felt that he must somehow discover its meaning; and when finally the memory of it eluded him, he asked himself what manner of dream it might have been: good or bad, premonition of evil or augury of fortune? All that lingered was a sense of colours running into one another and remembered sensations of speed and stillness, of departure and stay. There had been a hint of coolness and the great heat of the midday sun. He had felt the delicate texture of leaves and had seen branches opening before him, like welcoming arms.

Dreaming, he'd said to himself: "I am dreaming," and on awakening: "I have dreamed this dream before."

Open-eyed, he tried to place the dream in time. Had he dreamed it a week ago, a month, a year? He felt that if he could recall the exact period in which it had occurred before, its purpose as a segment in the wild puzzle of his life might emerge.

Dawn beat against his door, accompanied by sounds from the rest of the house. There was an outburst of coughing and spitting, and the groans of people hoisting themselves out of slumber like buffaloes out of their wallow. Part'n Deen thought with a smile: Lucky for them they are not such as I, for it is not always wise to sleep so sound.

He rose and went to the door. The sun had not yet risen but the air was tremulous with its approach, and he could hear the peacocks calling

The fields smelled fresh and alive. He stood there,

in the lentil fields beyond the village walls. The courtyard was grey with the smoke of last night's fires and scented with dew from the jacaranda tree. Part'n Deen thought of the jacaranda flowers in spring—flowers as blue as Marsden's eyes—and he wondered whether the policeman was awake at this moment and standing at the door of his great house at Agra contemplating his garden and the red-turbaned constables who stood on guard at the gates. Had Marsden dreamed, last night, the triumphant dreams of his kind?

Although he had never seen Marsden, Part'n Deen knew a great deal about him. He'd been

In silence, the procession shuffled past. Marsden did not once look up. He kept his gaze firmly fixed on the passing pairs of feet

watching the antelope, and remembering how he had outwitted Marsden in the past. Then, suddenly, he felt his dream returning, and he was uneasy

told precisely what he looked like, his peculiarities of speaking and walking, his taste in dress, his preference in food. Part'n Deen had, last year, tried to poison him, but Marsden, too, had a seventh sense; he'd suspected the deadly nightshade in is tea and had gone directly to the man bribed to put it there and had flogged him with his own hands, then let him go.

It was just what I would have done in his place, Part'n Deen reflected, breathing the cool air and hearing, in the walled pen nearby, the restless stirring of the Khan's buffalo herd. It is what I would have done. Except for the colour of our eyes, and perhaps also for certain differences in our characters, we are much alike, that man and I.

He turned back to his room and picked up his brass water jar and went to the well in a corner of the courtyard. There he filled the jar, and then he made his way through the gate to the plain beyond. Squatting under a thorn tree, he performed his functions, aware that round him others were doing likewise—men, women and children, silent and decorous, shawls wrapped round their heads, feet moving to the clink of anklets. Once in a while there came the sleepy whimper of a child.

He rose and wrapped his own shawl over his shoulders. He stood for a moment and gazed across the plain, watching the day start across it in a great sweep of light. From the village there came a prolonged lowing of cattle, as pens were thrown open and the herds streamed out to pasture. The bandit's gaze moved carefully across the awakening landscape, but this morning was as peaceful as any other, and all that stirred had a friendly look: the cattle from the village and a bullock cart creaking northwards from Agra.

If Marsden and his troop should come, it would be from the south, down the hard, white road between the lentil fields and the plain. But Marsden was probably eating his English breakfast at Agra, with his young wife seated before him as freshly pink as one of her own roses.

Returning to the village, Part'n Deen took a different path in order to avoid the dust stirred by the cattle, and as the Khan's tiled roof and painted gateway appeared, he experienced a pleasant sense of ownership in this house, and in the roofs, the mud walls, the cattle pens, lanes and alleys of the village itself; for by sparing these, by taking them, so to speak, under his wing, had he not in a sense re-created them, setting them dominant on the arid plain, prosperous above the charred and deserted ruins of all those villages which he had not spared?

He reflected on them, also, with the pride of proprietorship. They lay—what was left of them—north, south, east and west of this village of Koj. What had come out of those others in the way of loot had been scrupulously distributed, so that not even the Khan had reason to regret his hospitality to Part'n Deen and his band.

Skirting a field of lentils which stood as high as his shoulder, the bandit spied the pointed tip of an antelope's horn as it moved through the green, and he knew at once that the does must be travelling in the opposite direction, as decoys to distract attention from their lord. Clever creatures! Men could learn from them, as he had learned, and he smiled as he recalled the great raid on the village of Manud, last year.

Marsden and his policemen, informed of the *dacoity*—the armed robbery—in progress at Manud, had staged a counter-raid, only to find themselves engulfed in a sea of screaming women driven forth by the bandits, and the village itself, stripped down to its last ear-ring, turned into a fortress of flames between pursuer and pursued.

This morning, the fields smelled fresh and alive, and suddenly Part'n Deen felt his dream coming back to him. But now, as before, it ped away, seeming to touch him only in passing, melting into the green fastness before eye or mind could grasp its detail.

The village was awake, its dung fires scenting the air as he passed into the Khan's courtyard, where his host waited to greet him. A handsome and powerfully built man of great intelligence and considerable wealth, the Khan had for years managed to preserve the intricate balance of his loyalties toward the bandit on one hand and the police on the other, and, between them, the village of Koj had enjoyed a peace and prosperity long since lost to the remainder of the district.

Host and guest saluted each other, and the Khan inquired of Part'n Deen how he had slept. "Well," Part'n Deen replied. "That is, as well as I ever sleep."

"No bad dreams?" the Khan asked, smiling.

"Dreams, yes, but whether good or bad I cannot judge."

The Khan laid a hand on his shoulder. "Food is ready. Come, my son will attend us."

Part'n Deen followed his host into a large, cool room reserved for the men of the house. A space on the floor had been swept and cleaned, and they seated themselves cross-legged before

The young man kept his eyes lowered. "You expect me to believe all this?" demanded the bandit

it, while the Khan's son placed a bolster behind each, for greater comfort, then carried in the food on brass platters, and brought tumblers filled with hot, sweetened tea.

The Khan said, "I dislike imparting bad news before a meal, but our young friend Nazim has arrived, and he tells me that your lieutenants, Hamid and Syed, were taken by Marsden the night before last, at Agra, while they were at prayer."

Part'n Deen, lifting a tumbler of tea to his beard, held it without drinking. "At Agra, while at prayer?" he asked.

"Oh, Marsden waited until they were finished, then had them handcuffed and carried to the jail."

"But I told them not to go to Agra! This is what they get for their stupidity."

"It was because of the women," the Khan explained, shaking his head. "They had been absent from home a long time. To want to return was natural enough."

"It was natural, like most forms of human imbecility," Part'n Deen replied with an angry flash of his teeth, and added, "So Marsden has caught them—caught Hamid and Syed."

"That is not the worst, my friend. He's caught your wife."

Part'n Deen was silent, and the Khan laid a sympathetic hand on his knee. "It was a trap, baited with a rumour that you had surrendered," the Khan explained. "Marsden offered amnesty to such as would give themselves up voluntarily, and she did so."

"So he lied!" Part'n Deen exclaimed angrily. "For the first time in my knowledge of him, the great Marsden lied, and to a woman!"

"He did precisely what you would have done in his place," said the Khan. "You have often said that your methods, and his, have much in common."

After a moment's pause, the bandit asked abruptly: "This Nazim. Where is he now?"

"Resting. He travelled all night from Agra on foot."

"How does it happen that he is here? I know as a fact that all police leave has been cancelled."

The Khan laughed. "Nazim is a clever lad. He chewed castor-oil seeds until he became ill, so Marsden was forced to give him leave of absence."

"I feel uneasy about him. How did he know that I was with you?"

"Hamid told him."

"Hamid himself didn't know. I told no one I was coming here."

The Khan frowned. "Hamid must have learned about it. You misjudge Nazim. Has he ever failed us in the year that he has been our friend?"

"How can we be sure that he has not?"

"Brother," said the Khan, "bad news has soured you." He turned to his son. "Fetch Nazim to us."

WHEN the young man had gone, the Khan looked reproachfully at his guest. "I have known Nazim since he was a child," he said. "It was I who first saw his possibilities and schemed to get him this post in the constabulary, under Marsden. I felt sure that the time would eventually come when he would prove useful to us."

"Marsden might have had the same idea," said Part'n Deen; then, contrite, he added, "you must forgive me. The news has, indeed, not been auspicious."

"Well, at any rate, they have not got *you*," the Khan reminded him, with a laugh. "Nor is there much chance that they will. Rest here one more night, and tomorrow we shall go together to my brother's house, to Sind, in the west. Once there you will be able to start afresh and build up a new company. So far as your wife is concerned, the world knows she is innocent. When all hope of your capture has gone, they will be bound to set her free, and she can then rejoin you."

The Khan's son reappeared, followed by a young man wearing the khaki cotton uniform and red turban of the provincial police. Seeing Part'n Deen, he made a deep salaam, then stood at attention.

The Khan gave him a friendly nod. "Be at ease, my boy," he said. "We are not the captain of police!"

The young man smiled, then squatted on his heels before them.

"It is ten miles from Agra." Part'n Deen gave him a hard look. "How did you manage it, ill as you were?"

"Ill! My stomach was neighing like a horse all the way. Luckily, a farmer let me ride part of the distance in his cart, or I would never have got here alive."

"Was it necessary to make yourself so sick?"

"To convince Marsden, yes."

"He trusts you, then?"

"Oh, implicitly."

"How did you know that I was here?"

"Hamid told me. I was in his guard when we took him to jail."

"And did he tell you how he happened to learn of my whereabouts?"

"No. We had but a moment for conversation. He wanted you to be told of his arrest, and to send you warning."

PART'N DEEN continued to look at him with hard, relentless eyes. "What is to prevent your going back to Marsden and telling him that you have seen me here?"

"Where is Marsden now?" Part'n Deen demanded suddenly.

"There was a story that you had been seen in Lucknow, and he has gone there in search of you."

"You expect me to believe all this?"

"On my head, it is the truth."

"You mean to tell me that the police haven't tortured everything out of Hamid and Syed?"

"There was no chance, for both swallowed opium immediately after capture, and both were unconscious when I left."

Part'n Deen continued to look at him with hard, relentless eyes. "What is to prevent your going back to Marsden and telling him that you have seen me here?"

The boy shrugged. "It would be easy enough to prevent me," he said. "I am in your hands."

The Khan interposed fussily. "What talk is this, between friends?"

Part'n Deen was silent, his brain turned suddenly bleak with an unfamiliar thought. He was alone! Of that band, almost two hundred, his comrades for fifteen years, not one remained alive and free. Marsden had got them all. There was, of course, the Khan, but the Khan had never mingled his blood and sweat with theirs. He was a loyal friend, but hardly an indispensable one; his house had been a sanctuary, not the scene of adventure and triumph.

And as this strange sense of isolation grew on Part'n Deen, he found himself gazing into Nazim's eyes; and shame touched him gently, like a reminding hand. Here, he thought, is one scarcely known to me, one who, at risk of his life, dragged himself ten miles through the dust to bring me word and warning.

Never before, reflected the bandit, have I felt the need for trust as I do at this moment, nor have I ever before considered the dependence of the strong upon the weak! Once more he felt this dream like some hovering wraith, and he wondered whether perhaps he could have dreamed of youth, and of the passion and high adventure of youth.

"Forgive me," he said to Nazim, "my seeming harshness. Return to Agra, tell them you learned that I had indeed gone to Lucknow, and

Continued on page 36

As woodpigeons fly in to feed beside the decoys he has placed on the sheaves, Fred fires. Among other enemies are moles, rooks and grey squirrels

Civil servant with a shotgun

by JOHN MAY

Fred Carter can read nature's signs as easily as official forms. His job? To rid farmers of crop-destroying pests

ARRIVING HOME IN HIS CAR one sunny day last year, Fred Carter was startled to see his wife making wild signs from behind a tightly shut upstairs window. "Mind the *bees*!" she called through the glass. Wondering what she meant, for he did not keep bees, he drove towards the garage . . . and suddenly stopped with his windscreen smothered. "Bees were crawling over everything in thousands," says Fred. "The air was thick with them. And then I realized what I had done."

He had been called the previous day to an old farmhouse where wild bees had got in behind the outside plaster and become a nuisance. He erected platforms, gassed most of the bees as they flew in and out, and pulled out the nest. "There were three pailfuls of dirty wax and honey mixed up with broken laths and bits of plaster. I left it outside my garage that evening, intending to burn or dispose of it somehow next day. But I forgot to cover it up."

Some time after sunrise, bees from miles around began to head for Carter's garage. By mid-morning, tradesmen were avoiding the house, and Mrs. Carter was even plugging her keyholes for fear honey-drunk bees should crawl indoors. Fred, who normally never bothers with a bee veil, had to wrap his head in an old lace curtain, put on gauntlet gloves, and use his gas pump on the thickest of the cloud. Then he dumped the buckets in a field. "By next day the bees had cleared the lot, and bee-keepers not far away must have had a record harvest."

Any wild creature that hinders food production is part of Fred Carter's job as one of nearly eight hundred pest men employed by the Ministry of Agriculture. Some, such as rats, rabbits and rooks, are commonplace; others are more rare. Not long ago something started killing hens on a chicken farm. "The mystery wasn't very difficult to solve," says Fred. "People never see a badger, so they think they don't exist in their neighbourhood. They're nocturnal, and not strictly a pest; they do good by destroying young rabbits. But this one was gorged and fast asleep in a hen house, with the evidence of chicken murder all round him." Three feet long and weighing about fifteen pounds, he provided a warm fur mat for the Carter's drawing-room.

Rats and rabbits alone would eat as much as every man, woman and child in Britain if left unchecked. Fred Carter covers the farms in north-east Essex, from Braintree to the sea and north to the Suffolk borders, and these two pests, with moles and rooks, woodpigeons and grey squirrels, are his main "enemies." In the last ten years in his territory, as elsewhere, pests have been drastically reduced. "We're doing the work today with six operators where once we had a couple of dozen."

At first, rats especially were a big menace. After training land girls for six months in the early days, Carter sent two of them one morning to deal with rats in an unoccupied farmhouse. Dozens of grey darting shapes frisked away as the girls went from room to room spooning bait into holes. A rat scrambled across one girl's shoe, and another fell from a shelf and tangled

Rosemary and Sheila McGregor watch Fred prepare a jackdaw trap on their father's land. Birds fly in through the funnel to feed, and cannot escape. One farmer caught a thousand in a year

momentarily in the other's hair. When she went to her haversack for a snack, five rats sprang out; they had gnawed through the canvas and eaten everything.

Carter works under a county pest officer, and regards himself as partly a kind of State gamekeeper, and partly as a commercial traveller for a service to agriculture. "I'll bet I am the only man who works for you at a non-profit price," he tells his farmer friends. Farms and estates are cleared of rats on an annual contract, which may run from £10 to £200. Other jobs are priced on a repayment basis according to cost.

"We assistant pest officers have to be ready for anything—including hornets," says Carter. Hornets are double the size of wasps (which Fred dismisses as "chicken feed"), have vicious tempers, and a powerful sting.

Dive-bombed By Hornets

One day recently, Carter supplied a farmer with some of the cyanide-based powder, giving off a lethal gas, which is used for many jobs of pest destruction. The farmer had a hornets' nest in a manure heap, and went out that night after dark to tackle it. Next time they met, the farmer's eye was nearly shut by the swelling on one side of his face. "I didn't realize that hornets fly at night as well as in the day," he said. "But I soon found out."

In another assistant pest officer's territory a farmworker volunteered to deal with a large hornets' nest in the farmhouse attic. "It hung like a great old Chinese lantern from a rafter, all streaked with the different colours of wood they had chewed up to make it," he said. "Like a fool, I stuck my nose too close."

Dodging the dive-bombing hornets, he crashed through the ceiling into a bedroom where the farmer's daughter was sleeping late after a dance. The girl woke and screamed. The farmer happened to be loading a shotgun; rushing to the stairs, he tripped on a mat and shot his grandfather clock full in the face.

Hornets are not as destructive as wasps, which can slash orchards of plums and pears to ribbons. Grey squirrels are worse still. They attack fruit buds as well as fruit, devastate plantations of seedling trees, ruin corn, and eat eggs and fledgling birds. "Grey squirrels haven't reached my territory yet," says Carter, "and I don't want them to."

They are not far away. On the wall of the county pest officer's room in Chelmsford is a large map of Essex with a score of yellow pins along the western borders. The pins indicate squirrel clubs. "The clubs have four or five members each," says the county pest officer. "The minimum is three. Two shoot, and the third, using a pointed sixty-foot aluminium pole which we lend out, pokes the squirrels out of the dreys—the nests they build high in the trees."

Red Squirrel As A Pet

For every squirrel tail it sends in, a club receives two free cartridges; alternatively, on behalf of the Forestry Commission, the pest officer pays a shilling a tail. There are about twelve hundred grey squirrel clubs in England and Wales, with 5,773 members, and more than 103,000 tails have been exchanged for shillings or cartridges.

Grey squirrels oust the native reds. One of Fred Carter's colleagues, a warrener who sleeps in a caravan to be on the job early and late when destroying rabbits, keeps a red squirrel (greys as pets are illegal) to show people the difference. Intelligent and playful, Rufus sits on his master's shoulder, nibbles his ear, and stops when rebuked for nibbling too hard. He sleeps in the pocket of an old coat hanging behind the door.

"One winter night it was a bit too cold for him," says Carter. "He crept down the bed and gnawed the buttons off his master's pants."

On the same wall-map in the Chelmsford office is another set of pins, blue ones, representing "voluntary area schemes" to fight wild rabbits. Pest officers have now organized nearly six hundred of these "Anti-Rabbit Home Guard" units in the country.

Among the worst infested areas in Essex are derelict railway lines, overgrown with thick scrub. Rabbits burrow in the cuttings and go poaching on neighbouring land. They have to be gassed in their holes, trapped with the new humane traps now replacing gins, or shot. Some always survive. Out rabbiting one day, Fred Carter and his companions saw a rabbit take a header out of a tree into a pond and swim away. "We were all too flabbergasted to fire."

Apart from rabbits, the worst burrowing pests on farms are moles. Tempted with mildly poisoned worms inserted in the deep main runs, they die safely beneath the ground where no other creature can get at them. "They are the only things we are allowed to poison with strychnine," says Fred. "People often suggest poisoned corn as a means of destroying rooks, but think of the chain of death that might result!"

Some years ago, in a neighbouring county, a farmhand found one of his cockerels dead, and wondered whether to have it for dinner. Luckily for him, his wife did not like the idea, so instead he boiled the bird with swill for his pigs. One of the pigs died; the chicken had been pecking at a rook wrongly killed with strychnine.

Trap Became "Restaurant"

The latest cartridge-saving method recommended by pest officers for destroying rooks and jackdaws where they become too numerous is a wire-netting cage with a wire-netting funnel on top, and food inside. "With a decoy, or one or two live birds in the trap, others quickly flock in," says Fred. They are killed at night; one farmer exterminated a thousand in a season. "But another chap, trying to be clever, put a perch under the funnel as an added attraction. Instead, it showed them the way out. All his local birds learned the trick, and used the trap as a restaurant."

An Essex farmer's son, Carter is broadly built, jolly, and bubbling with energy. Keener on shooting than farming, he became a gamekeeper on a rented shoot of two thousand acres when things got bad for farmers in the twenties. In a dozen years he increased the partridges by three hundred per cent. His treasured momento of those days is the peregrine falcon, now stuffed and mounted, which he caught after it had caused much destruction to the game.

In his first gamekeeping season he killed 250 head of vermin—stoats, weasels, carrion crows, sparrow-hawks, magpies. He became a pest operator twelve years ago, then a foreman and a supervisor, and was finally persuaded to become an assistant pest officer. He is just as much at home reading the signs of the countryside as he is reading official notices and forms. "Every bird-note has a message for a real countryman."

Hearing a blackbird "pinking" a danger warning one day when he was still a gamekeeper, he guessed that a stoat was lurking in the vicinity. Making a squealing sound like a young rabbit in distress, he lured the stoat into the open. A doe rabbit also came up because of the squeals. Rabbits are normally terrified of stoats, which stalk, hypnotize and kill them. But this mother rabbit rushed at the stoat and knocked it flying with a kick of her powerful hind legs.

Foxes In Hemlock Forest

"For a minute that stoat was completely flustered. It just didn't know what had hit it. Then I shot it, and the rabbit ran off."

The most controversial pests of all are foxes. Pest officers normally have little to do with them, except in urban areas which no pack of foxhounds can hunt. Fred Carter turned out not long ago with sixteen others to deal with a plague of ravenous foxes which had bred on a rubbish tip of a hundred acres or more at Dagenham. The foxes were raiding dustbins at night for food, and nobody could keep tame rabbits or chickens in the district because the foxes stole them.

"The tip was a jungle of giant hemlock, and the foxes made regular paths," says Carter. "We forced our way through and shot half a dozen. And, although it was mid-morning, we also turned up two courting couples." THE END

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A heartbeat to eternity

by ***JOHN YEOMANS***

ILLUSTRATED BY EDWIN PHILLIPS

The watch was made the day he was born. Its tick was like his heartbeat: he knew it *mustn't* stop

"How old would you say I was?" he asked abruptly. I looked at him carefully in the hot Australian sunlight. He was a slim and handsome old man, very carefully shaved. I put him at seventy: and I was going to say sixty-five, the way you do, when I noticed that he was waiting tensely for my answer, as though it was important to know what I really thought.

"Seventy," I said.

"Seventy-eight," he said. "Seventy-eight." Far from showing any triumph because I had guessed too low, he gave a little sigh. "Three-score and ten, the book says, and I'm eight years over. Makes you wonder, you know."

"Wonder what?"

"Well, how long it will be."

He didn't look like a happy man or a relaxed man, but I didn't think he was a sick man; he seemed too spruce and wiry, and the whites of his eyes were clear as a boy's. I mumbled something about nobody knowing when it would be his time to go. "I'll know," said the old man clearly.

I'd met him only ten minutes before. I'd

The family gathered to say goodbye. There was a lump in his throat as he picked up his coat. His mother gave him the watch and he saw the dial

been plodding up the crumbly white earth of this lonely road when I'd seen an iguana sunning itself on a spotted gum in one of the scrub-covered vacant lots. Curious, I walked right up to the tree and hissed, "Scram!" to see what would happen. Nothing at all happened for a moment, and then the lizard, with its two-foot long body, was suddenly right at my end of the branch, with its primeval head cocked combatively at me.

I was staring back at it, feeling rather startled, when a man's voice said rather shyly: "Just walk away. A goanna won't do anything unless you trouble him, like."

The old man, I saw, was sitting by himself in a canvas chair, behind a clump of flannel-flower.

I walked straight back to the road. When I looked round again, the old man was following me out of the field. He had come half way when he stopped in his stride, listening. High up on the ridge a mile away, I heard a rumbling sound. At first it was all mixed up with the din of the cicadas, but it soon resolved into a loud rattling which I couldn't place. It meant something to the old man, though, for he pulled out a watch and looked at it carefully. When the noise died away, he dropped the watch back in his pocket and came up to me.

"Thanks for putting me right just now," I said.

"You're from England?" he said. "Well, now! You might walk the suburbs of Sydney for a month and not see another goanna these days."

Apart from the Ogilvies' place where I'd just been visiting, the only house in sight was a nearby cottage with a red-painted iron roof. I asked the old man if he lived there, and he said, with an unexpected sombreness: "Live! Have you ever tried to live with a nagging woman? Half the time I sit out in the bush to get a bit of peace."

"Look out!" I yelled. The old man shot out his arm, back-handed, to save the watch

The ice was broken now. He told me he had made his canvas chair himself. I found he had retired from his work as a telephone linesman years ago. He talked on with the eagerness of the lonely man—in fact, with a little more than that. After a while I felt he was trying to lead the conversation round to something, but I didn't know what it was. I was still wondering, when I heard the noise on the ridge again.

Once more the old man pulled out his watch; he wore it on the end of a leather strap which ran from his lapel to the handkerchief pocket of his coat.

"What *is* that I hear, anyway?" I asked him.

"Train," he said, "electric suburban train from Hornsby to Wynyard. Hear that—the loud, hollow noise? That means it's near the bottom of the hill from Turramurra, going real fast, before the driver pulls up for Pymble Station." He gave the stem of his watch a delicate fraction of a turn. "It's three fifty-six now."

"How do you know?"

"Those trains are always on time. And there's a fifteen-minute service all day."

"You seem to keep a pretty close tab on that schedule," I said.

"I do, truly," he answered with that faintly un-Australian turn of phrase, suggesting he had not been born in the country. "Long as I can hear those old trains, I know how I'm—well, no matter."

I wanted to stay and talk to him, but he'd reminded me that time, by his watch or any other, was moving on, and I thought I ought to be getting back to the ship.

"I was going to walk towards the station myself," the old man said quickly. "I need the exercise. Perhaps you wouldn't mind if we went together?"

"Why, no," I said. "Come on."

"Perhaps—" he said hesitantly, as we walked along. "There's something—I'd like to show you something—if you're interested. Something about that watch of mine." He couldn't wait to take his watch out. He clicked open the old-fashioned front cover and exposed a dial marked in spidery, elegant Roman numerals. Under the XII, I saw the maker's name: *Jos. Meadowbank and Son, Watchmakers, Exeter, 1875*. "See something odd?" the old man asked.

"Exeter—in Devonshire? Is there something——"

"Not that. The date the watch was made."

"Eighteen seventy-five? That's a long time ago."

"It's the year I was born."

"Is that right?" I checked it in my head. "So it is," I said.

"My mother gave me this watch the day I left home," the old man said. "They all got together in the drawing-room to say goodbye—my mother, my father, my little sister. There was a lump in my throat, I can remember that. . . ." He paused and looked at me. "I was nineteen and I was emigrating to Australia. My mother, she wanted to give me something good as a keepsake, so she went into our market town and found this watch in a second-hand shop. When she saw my very own birth date on the dial—well, she felt it was the sure hand of fate. And secretly, I know, she always hoped it would remind me of the old country and bring me back one day."

"Have you ever been back?"

The old man looked up. "No. Never. But I'll tell you something. That watch has never stopped since I've had it, and that's fifty-nine years." He stood still and he was staring at me so intently I knew we were coming to the crux of the business now. "Fifty-nine years in my pocket," he said. "Watchmakers have stopped that watch to clean it, of course, but that doesn't count. What I mean is, it's never stopped of its own accord, not once. So here we are, this watch and me, just the same age—and do you know what?" He swallowed. "You're a man of the world. If I said I believe that when this watch stops, then I'll stop—if I told you that, would you think I was daft, now?"

"For heaven's sake!" I said.

"Well, I believe it," he said. "Call it superstition or what you like. If it wasn't for the date—that's what I can't get over. Truly, it's like a sign. Born together and—then what?"

"Don't talk like that," I said.

But there was no stopping him now. "Talk? Sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night and reach over quick to the table beside the bed to see if the watch is still going. I keep telling myself that I won't look at it when I hear those trains running down that hill, but I don't seem to be able to help myself now. It's not the dying I mind, or don't mind so much. It's being given notice of it, like. Suppose my old watch stops, how much longer have I got? A day? Half a day?" I could see the muscles bunching and flattening at the angle of his jaw.

"Here," I said, "take it easy."

His shoulders fell forward as he made himself calm down. "I don't get out enough now, that's half my trouble," he said. He put the watch back and wiped the palms of his hands, with a downward movement, on the side of his coat. "You're just passing through Sydney?"

I told him that I'd come out on a warship which was making a goodwill cruise. As we shook hands, the next train rattled down. The old man checked the time: eleven minutes past four, precisely.

"Of course, I came to this street a lot during the war," I said. "The Ogilvies used to ask me up for dinner quite a bit when I was

commanding a destroyer based in Sydney. I've been having a kind of reunion with the family this afternoon."

I didn't tell him that Jim Ogilvie had drunk my health so thoroughly that I wouldn't let him run me back to the station in his car. Jim's a real prince, but you could hardly say he's been on the wagon since he was wounded in Libya.

I was thinking about wars in general when the old man said: "I can remember nineteen fourteen better than nineteen forty-one. Of course I was in France, that first time. But just lately, don't know why, my mind seems to be going right back, to my boyhood even. They say a drowning man's life passes before him."

"Come on," I said. "Let's get going."

A bit later he burst out: "But I can recall my old father and his big black beard better than my last foreman! And my mother—if I shut my eyes this minute I can see her face, just as she looked when she gave me this watch."

It was in his hands again.

"I haven't seen one of those for a long time," I said, trying to divert him.

"No? They're worth a look." He began to undo the clip at the end of the leather thong. I didn't want him to do it, but he said: "No trouble. Know anything about watches?"

I told him that I knew a certain amount about marine chronometers, because I'd put in a lot of service as a navigator.

"You'd appreciate this sort of workmanship then," the old man said, and he put that beautiful old silver watch in my hand.

THE watch had a front cover plate with a glass-filled hole in its centre, so that you can see the hands and tell the time in the rain without opening the plate. But to read the seconds dial, of course, you must open the lid. I opened it and, from force of habit, read off the time accurately. It was seventeen minutes and forty-five seconds after four o'clock.

I checked the maker's date again, too. It certainly was a disturbing coincidence. I turned the watch over, admiring the quality of the silver.

"And the enamel of the dial hasn't discoloured at all," the old man said.

I looked back to the dial again and automatically noted the time again. That's when a cold feeling of crisis began to rise inside my stomach. "No," I said, "the dial's perfect."

The old man politely held out his hand for the watch.

"Lord, that sun's hot," I said. "I wouldn't mind resting in the shade for five minutes."

We had turned the bend in the road by now and were on a road lined with red-brick bungalows, with rose beds in their front lawns; there was a row of camphor laurel trees along the pavement.

"It *is* hot," the old man agreed, leading the way to a tree.

Trailing behind him, I looked hard at the second hand again. Any time you take a quick look at the second hand of a watch it seems not to be moving; to be dead certain, I counted three and looked again. Then I realized it was no use trying to fool myself any longer. The watch had been going when the old man gave it to me; it might have been going day and night, guarded and hovered over and thought about, for God knows how many years; but it wasn't going now.

It had stopped, in my hands, at seventeen minutes and forty-five seconds after four o'clock.

I've often wondered, since then, what would have happened if I'd just handed the watch back to the old man. But I couldn't do it. I just could not bring myself to turn to that nice old chap and say: "Listen, you know that thing that has been haunting you all these years? Well, it's just happened."

At first I just stood on the pavement, holding the watch in a frozen kind of panic. I knew that if I was going to do anything I'd have to do it quickly. I'd remembered that another of those trains was due to go down the hill soon.

I gave way to what must be an instinct of mankind and tried to get the watch going by shaking it. The old man was busy running his handkerchief around inside his collar. With my back half turned to him, I shut the front cover and gave the watch six or seven jerks by flicking my wrist, as you shake a thermometer. To see if that had succeeded, I had to look at the second hand—it would have seemed too suspicious if I'd held the watch up to my ear. I pressed the little silver spike in the stem and the cover flew open with its loud click.

"Works smooth, that catch, even after all these years," said the old man. He was putting his handkerchief away.

He held out his hand, still politely, but very definitely. I'd had his watch long enough. I tried to stall by talking about the cover hinges. He half lowered his hands.

"That's what I mean by workmanship—the small parts," he said. "It's wonderful how they stand up."

"I'll bet this watch has been in some rough places."

"That it has. I went into the quarries when I first landed in Australia."

I SNEAKED another look at the dial. That tiny hand was still stuck on forty-five seconds. I put my finger and thumb unobtrusively on the winding knob. "Quarries?" I asked, as I tried to wind the watch. I couldn't; it was already wound as tight as a drum.

"The quarries. We were getting out blue metal," he said.

I managed to push the winder knob down into the position in which it moves the hands, and as soon as I saw my chance I turned them a little, hoping that the rotation would free something. It was then that I heard the first sounds from the ridge.

"What's blue metal?" I asked. I knew by the old man's surprised look that I must have almost shouted.

"Those stones they use in the roads, like."

"Where were the quarries?"

I probably seemed like a lunatic, but the old man didn't answer, anyway. He'd heard the train on the ridge, himself, now. "There it goes," he said. "Twenty-six minutes past four, I reckon it is. Pass me my old watch, will you?"

I raised the watch in front of me, openly, and gave the second hand one long, last look. It wasn't moving.

You have to finish what you start. I was standing right above the concrete kerb of the pavement; I even remember that the edge looked a little bumpy. I knew the old man wouldn't take it for a divine manifestation if some external force stopped the watch, just so long as it didn't stop on its own. So, as I reached out to give the thing back, I opened my fingers slightly a few inches short of the old man's waiting hand and let the watch slide out into thin air.

As it dropped, I shouted, "Hey—look out!" and I felt like Judas Iscariot.

But an old man doesn't live with a private juju like that without storing up some reflexes about it. The watch wasn't half way to the ground before he gave a hoarse grunt, doubled himself into a crouch, and flashed his hand down.

The watch dropped into the old man's hand and bounced. He grabbed backhanded, caught it, fumbled, and let it go.

Instantly he brought his other hand up underneath, and the fist closed around the watch. He pulled that hand tight up against his chest and fell back in a sprawl on the pavement. Next minute he sat up, resting on one arm, his face so white I thought he was going to have a heart attack. "You damned fool!" he said, faintly.

I bent down to help him up. He gasped for breath. "You clumsy swine," he bellowed. "Are you a half-wit? A man gives you his watch to look at and you can't even hold it in your rotten, stinking hands!"

He gasped for breath again and tried to open the front cover of the watch. His work-thickened fingers were shaking so much that the case slipped about in his hand.

"Look," I said, "I ought to tell you that ——"

"Shut up!" he said.

HE lifted the watch to his ear. When he lowered it, his eyebrows were joined in a furious line across his nose. "You're lucky it's still going," he said.

"It's what?"

"No thanks to you."

At least I had sense enough to keep my mouth shut while my head cleared, and I managed to understand that of course the watch could be going again. The drop into the old man's hand had been hard enough to restart the capricious old works.

I felt a surge of relief, but it was swamped next minute by the miserable knowledge that I should still tell the old man, to warn him that what had happened once would probably happen again. My discomfort was making me touchy, too, and I said, sharply: "If it's going, what's all the shouting about?"

The old man scrambled to his feet. "I'll shout if I want to!" he said.

"Well, don't shout at me!"

I thought he was going to punch me.

"What do you think I ought to be doing—laughing and joking?" he said. "I should have known better than to trust you with the watch at all."

He yanked at the leather thong, fumbled for the clip, and slammed the watch back on the little metal ring. His fingers went to the stem as usual, but this time his hands were shaking with rage. Instead of giving the knob a tentative little feel, he gave it a hard twist. The ancient, perpetually fully

LIFE WITH FATHER

MY father once undertook the stabling of a team of show horses from America. Among these was a particularly vicious stallion that had once killed a man. Nobody but his own groom could go near him, but he was a magnificent creature and I could not keep away from his box.

One day, when I was about five, I slipped in to pat him. My father suddenly appeared at the door and quietly offered me strawberries and cream if I came out without a fuss.

I responded eagerly, but the promise put Father in a spot, as strawberries were out of season. Finally he had to take me up to London in order to keep his word.

Horses were Father's life. He bred hackneys for showing, but never liked parting with any horse he became fond of. When we first went to live at Chalfont St. Giles, in Bucks, there was stabling for four horses; by the time we left we had fifty-five.

There was also a miniature pony, properly house-trained, that came indoors, and would even walk up and down the stairs on his own.

Because, to some extent, I shared Father's interest in horses, our bond was very close. It certainly helped him to overlook my scholastic shortcomings, which precipitated early retirement from both school and college. I can see him coming in for breakfast, stocky, cheery, fresh-complexioned, opening the letter with my sickening school report, and tossing it aside to ask some question about forage.

By profession he was a carriage and coach builder, and his hobby was collecting antique coaches. We had some gay times in these, togged in Pickwickian costume, with Father driving the four-in-hand.

One summer he reopened the historic road coach service between London and Oxford. The problem was stabling for the changes of horses on the way, as in one case the original stables had since been converted into garages. Characteristically, Father rented the garages and re-converted them into stables. He lost money on that enterprise, which he only entered into as a sporting venture.

Circus management he learnt the expensive way. Within a few days of our opening at Olympia, we were interviewed by a man who said that the band was playing copyright music, for which the fee was £20.

"Balderdash," Father replied, waving him away.

"It will cost you £50," the man said quietly.

Father exploded, but the visitor's cool answer was to add on another £50. Again Father refused, and the amount went up another £50. It reached £300 by the time the man left. I'm afraid we had to pay up.

The lesson served to warn him of pitfalls: when the story of the Loch Ness Monster first broke he offered £25,000 to the man who delivered it alive—but wisely insured the risk at a premium of £75.

His mania was neatness. Harness had to be gleaming, uniforms spick and span, the arena, stabling and artists' lines orderly and exact, or my brother and I got into trouble.

When we started the tenting show in 1929, I remember overhearing an old circus hand remark, as he watched my father arriving to inspect our work: "Here comes the guv'nor. Now we'll have to polish the grass!"

That day Father stopped before a long row of stable fittings set in the ground. He shut one eye and looked along the serried line. It was slightly crooked—no more than a couple of inches out at any point.

"Pull them up," he ordered, "and set them again."

But he was tolerant, trusting and open-hearted. A woman with about eight children once came to the office at Olympia to say that they had come up from Brighton, but had lost her handbag with her money and circus tickets. Father let her in the circus, and gave her £5 to see her home. A couple of days later the money was returned.

Who was the famous father? For his name and photograph, see page 43

wound and long overstrained mainspring broke with a small, clear crack.

The old man's body gave one convulsive jerk then, as though he had bottled up a wild, sharp howl of sorrow. He shook the watch frantically with both hands; the stem wobbled a little on its shaft, like something with its neck broken. There was an expression of shock and disbelief on the old man's face. I was looking at him in profile; his face seemed to be all bone.

WHEN his first agony had passed, he turned and found his way to the knee-high wooden rail which was the front fence of the nearest bungalow. He sat down on the fence for a long while, leaning forward, resting his elbows on his thighs and letting his hands fall free between his knees. When he felt better, he beckoned me to come over. I could smell the hydrangeas growing in a clump just behind him.

"I had no right to be raging at you," he said.

"Forget it," I told him.

"I'd like to ask you to forgive me."

"I've forgotten it," I said. "And that mainspring—it can be mended, easily."

"Thank God the watch went that way."

"Get another mainspring." I said, "and it will go for ever."

He fell silent again. After a while he raised his head. "Do you know," he said, "I've a mind not to have that watch repaired at all."

"No?"

"If it can't go, it can't stop," he said. "And it would look just as nice when it was stopped, if I put it in a drawer and didn't worry about it like I've been doing."

"Well," I said, "it's not exactly my business, but you could do worse."

"Yes, I might do that," he said, in a stronger voice. "Don't say I will, don't say I won't. But I'll think about it; yes, I very certainly will." The colour was beginning to come back to his cheeks now, and when he got to his feet again, I would have said he looked quite jaunty. THE END

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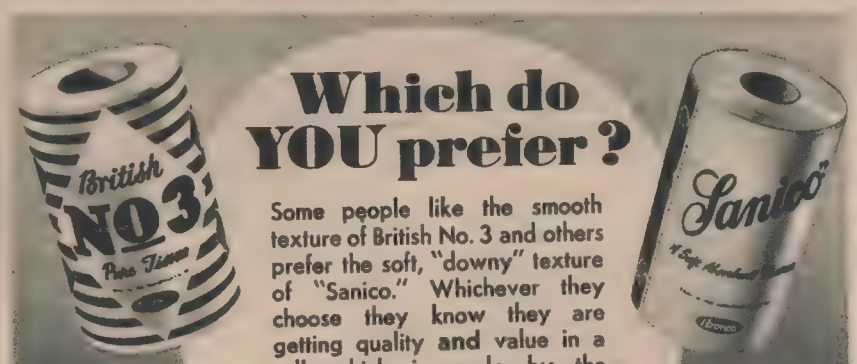

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EL DORADO

Continued from page 9

chattering about pennyweights and ounces of gold; about reefs and seams and veins; about ore and slimes and cyanide—a whole new language.

Maggie poured brisk scorn on the glamour of gold, but she was secretly pleased at this practical new interest. They were at least talking about *things*; they weren't mooning about the farm like their father. She even dreamed of them becoming mining engineers or geologists.

The boys would kick at an exposed rock, so that perhaps the sparks came dull red under their boot-soles, and say: "Daddy, perhaps this is a gold-rock?" Or they would come running with bits of decomposed stone that showed dull gleams of metal, and say: "Look, this *is* gold, it *is*, isn't it?"

"Maybe. This is *all* gold country," said Alec half-resentfully. "The prospectors used to come through here. A reef is supposed to run across the farm. Once they thought they'd find a mine as big as the Rand workings. Thank God they didn't!"

But his mind was stirred, in spite of himself. He thought of the old prospectors, wandering over the countryside with their meagre equipment, panning gold from the sand of river beds, crushing bits of rock, washing the grit for those tiny grains that might proclaim a new Rand. Sometimes, when he came on a projecting ledge of rock, instead of cursing it for being on farm land, he would surreptitiously examine it, thinking: That bit there looks as if it was broken off—perhaps one of the old hands tried a bit twenty years back.

Then he would take hold of himself, and wrench his mind back to the business of farming. The visible surface of the land, and the tame orderly top-soil. He suppressed his furtive speculations about the fascinating underground structures—or thought he did. In fact, he listened to the regular breathing thud-thud of the mine-stamps from the opposite ridge as if to the heart of a coveted but forbidden woman.

ALEC might have gone on like this for years but for a curious and unforeseen incident.

One evening an old, weather-stained man appeared at the door, and unslung from his back a great bundle of equipment, and came in for the night, assuming the traveller's privilege of hospitality.

He was one of the last of a vanishing race—the wandering prospectors—and he talked most of the night about his life on the veld. It was like a story from a child's adventure book, in its simplicity of luck and bad fortune and persistent courage rewarded only by the knowledge of right-doing.

For this old man spoke of the search for gold as another might of a scientific truth, or an artist of his art. Twice he had found gold, and sold his riches trustingly. He had been tricked by unscrupulous men who were now rich, while he was as poor as he had been forty years before.

He spoke of this angrily, but it was that kind of anger we maintain from choice, like a relative whose unpleasantness has become, through the years, almost a necessity.

There had been one brief period of months when he was very rich indeed, and squandered he did not know how much money in the luxury hotels of Johannesburg. . . . He spoke of this indifferently; it had been given to him, and then taken away again. That was all.

Maggie, listening, was thankful her children were not here. This feckless drifter might give them new, strange dreams with his talk of "strikes" and "reefs." She did not like the way Alec listened to the old man, his eyes glistening, sick interest in his every movement.

Maggie surprised herself in bed that night by breaking into a sudden flood of tears. The courage seemed to go out of her. When she thought of Alec she felt helpless; and the old man asleep in the next room made her angry. Why

"Gosh, am I tired! Been mowing the rug for half an hour"

did he have to come to *this* farm, why not take his dangerous gleam elsewhere?

When the old wanderer left next day, trudging off through the mealie fields with his pack over his shoulder, Alec watched him from the veranda. And that evening he climbed the hillock behind the house, and saw the small red glow of the prospector's camp-fire, down in the *vlei*. There the old man was after his day of rock-watching, rock-chipping. He would be cooking his supper, and afterwards would lie beside the embers, wrapped in his blanket, a fold of it across his face against the shifting moonlight.

Alec went slowly to bed, and dreamt of the old prospector, sleeping free and fearless under the naked stars.

Not long afterwards, a package arrived from the station. Maggie watched Alec open it and then she gasped with dismay. It was a gold-pan.

Alec held it clumsily between his palms, as he had seen the prospector do. He had not yet got the feel of the thing. It was like a deep frying pan, without a handle, of heavy black metal, with a fine groove along the inside rim. This groove was to catch the runnels of silt, that should hold grains of gold, if there was any gold. He brought back fragments of rock from the farm lands, and crushed them in a mortar, and stood beside the water tanks, swirling the muddy mixture round and round endlessly.

Each sample took a long time, and he could not be sure, at the end, whether it was done properly. But in almost every sample, dragging slow and heavy behind the grains of other minerals, he found a few dully shining grains of true gold.

He stood methodically practising, with the heavy pan between his palms, the packets of crushed rock on the ground beside him, and on the other side, the dripping water taps. Maggie watched him through the kitchen window. He was squandering the precious water, that must be brought from the well three times a week, in the water-cart. The household must always be careful of water, and now here was Alec, swilling away gallons of it every day.

Alec told himself it was merely a hobby. He worked as usual on the farm, picking up interesting bits of rock if he came across them, and panning them at evening, or at sunrise. The house was littered with lumps of rock. He did not yet know the names of all of them, and was troubled by his ignorance. It was not long before he sent for books; but meanwhile he moved like an explorer over the farm he imagined he knew so well, learning to see it in a new way.

He bared his big field for planting, and saw how the soil shaded and modulated from acre to acre, according to the rock below, of which it had been formed. He looked at the border slopes and saw the sharp quartz, now so vitally fascinating—the same quartz that for years he had been cursing because it made whole acres of his land unfit for the plough.

He sent for a geological map, and tacked it to the wall of his office. Maggie found it, and stood in front of it, secretly studying it. And when the books arrived and Alec took to spending all his evenings with them, she would turn over the pages curiously, during the day, gaining not so much knowledge, as an intimation of the wonderful future of this continent.

Perhaps Alec should have been a scientist, she thought, and not a farmer at all? Perhaps, with this capacity of his for completely losing himself, he might have been a great man?

When the boys came home from the school, they found their father using a new language. He still attended to the farm, but as a routine, for his passion had been withdrawn from it. He had taken half a dozen of the labourers from the fields, and they were digging trenches along the quartz reef.

At first the attractions of the new thing, and hearing their father talk of the way rocks behaved, and of the formations of the earth, held both the boys. For some days Maggie hardly saw them. They were with their father, or over at the mine on the ridge.

"Perhaps we'll have a proper mine on our farm, too," said Dan. But Paul, looking at his mother, sensing her feelings, said: "What do we want with a stupid gold mine? There are better things than that."

Maggie felt sudden warm tears in her eyes; she was quite unable to understand her own emotions. But later that day, feeling somehow that the pattern had been set, that Paul was "hers," she took the boy aside.

SHE said quietly to him: "There *is* a great future in mining, Paul, but not this way." She showed him the coloured map on the office wall, and spoke of the need for engineers and experts. He listened quietly, and rejected her vision of him. She could see it in his face.

"But my bairn," she said reproachfully, "that is what this country needs—skilled men, educated men. Don't you want to be an educated man that people'll look up to?"

The boy looked at her. He said: "I want to be a farmer."

"Oh no!" cried Maggie; and wondered herself at the passion she put into it. Why shouldn't he be a farmer? But she knew why. He was made for better things—for specialized, important things.

She said weakly: "I think you shouldnae make your mind to being a farmer so young."

But the boy was already embarrassed by the talk. He did not answer.

Paul spent his weeks at home in a troubled restless way, mostly in the house. He read a little, in his old childish books, which he had outgrown; he walked a little in the veld; he helped his mother with the chickens and the garden.

All the time, his face was stubborn and perplexed, and he looked at his father and his brother like rivals.

Dan refused to be upset by Paul. He was crazy with excitement, rushing in and out of the house with bits of rock, and announcements of imminent riches; he crushed stones in the mortar, and watched his father panning, and quickly learned to use the pan himself. Maggie watched the intent child at work beside the water-tanks, while the expensive water went sloshing over to the dry ground, so much that soon there were always puddles in the yard, and the tanks ran dry, and Alec had to give orders for the water-carts to make an extra journey.

Because of this, he began talking of sinking a new well; and at that Maggie became bitter, for she had often asked for a well close, at the back of the house, and there had never been time to see to it.

Water. There could be no gold without water. Maggie, sensible Maggie, would have said that there could be no farm, no life at all, without water. But Alec never saw it like that. Suddenly gold and water had become linked in his mind. He began to look for water in just the same obsessive way he had looked for gold.

He had begun to sink a new well, one day, when another vagrant appeared. He claimed he was a water-diviner. He would find water for the sum of one pound sterling.

That night Maggie was afraid for the boys. Till nearly dawn, the old water-diviner talked and talked, filling their young minds with magical possibilities. They could not be made to go to bed. The old man had many tales of travel and chance. Chance! It was always chance, thought Maggie, listening unhappily. Never in their lives would they call it fecklessness.

Paul sat quietly beside her, and missed not a word. The long, lean, silent child blinked slow attention through his dark and watchful eyes, which often rested on his brother. The sight of the attentive and noisy Dan seemed to make him scornful. He often made an impatient shrugging movement, as if all this eager interest seemed to him childish. Maggie rejoiced to see it.

NEXT morning, when they all set off for the ceremony, it was Dan who walked in front with the old diviner, Dan who cut twigs from the bushes, Dan who ran back and forth over the ground beside him, looking up into his face and repeating:

"Do you feel it? Is it moving now?"

Maggie remained a little way off, her apron lifted over her head against the sun, arms folded on her breast, in that ancient attitude of a patient ironic woman. Paul hung back with her; and shook his head sullenly when Dan offered him the forked twig. Dan claimed it worked for him, and it did. He stood on his two planted feet, elbows tight into his sides, as he was shown, with the angles of the twig between palm and thumb; and the apex of the twig turned down for him again and again.

"I'm a diviner, I'm a diviner!" cried Dan, delightedly; and the old man agreed that he had the gift.

Alec had indicated the place where he thought water ought to be; and the old man walked across and around it, with the twig, and at last he gave his sanction. The twig turned down, infallibly, at just that spot.

Alec paid him twenty shillings, and the diviner wandered off to the next farm.

Later, after sunset, when the children were in bed, she saw her husband go along the path, and cut himself a twig and walk with it between his hands, his thin, loose, rambling figure moving awkward and black against the flaring coloured sky. Because of the excitement in his face when he returned, she knew that he, too, "had the gift."

That term Maggie got a letter from the boys' headmaster, saying that Dan

should go into the practical side, while Paul, who as yet "showed no especial bent," would be "well-advised" to go to college, concentrating probably on the arts side. He was not "an easy boy to assess at this stage."

It was a tactful letter, but its sense was clear: both boys were going to cost them a great deal of money. She tried to choose a suitable time to discuss it with Alec, but he was vague and irritable with her, for his mind was on the slow descent of the well. He spent most of his day watching the work.

At thirty feet they came on water. It was not a very good stream, and might even fail in the dry season. But Alec was delighted.

"And if that silly old man hadnae come at all, the well would have been sunk just that place, and no fiddle-faddle with the divining rod," Maggie pointed out.

Alec gave her a short answer, and went off to the mine on the ridge, taking his rod with him.

The two mining brothers said tolerantly that he could find them a well, too, if he liked. He divined a place, and came home to tell Maggie he might earn a guinea if there turned out to be water.

"But man," said Maggie in amazement, "you aren't going to keep the family in shoe-leather on guineas!"

She asked again about the money for the boys' education, and Alec said: "But what's the matter with them? They're doing all right."

MAGGIE roused herself, and sold eggs and poultry to the store at the station to earn the extra pounds needed.

But, though she went on scraping shillings together, and hoarding them in a drawer, money from chickens and vegetables would barely pay for the extra coaching needed to prepare Dan for his technical scholarship exam, let alone put Paul through college.

She said to Alec: "The wages of the trench-boys would save up for the children's education." She did not add, for she could not think of herself as a nagging woman, "And if you put your mind to your farm, there'd be more at the end of a season." But although she did not say it, Alec heard it, and replied with that dogged silence. Once he said: "If I find another Rand here, the boys can go to Oxford if you want it." There was not a grain of humour in it; he was quite serious.

He was over at the mine every day, while the well was sunk. It was a crisis for him. They found water, and he earned his guinea, which he put carefully with the silver for paying the labourers. What Maggie did not know was that during that time, he had been walking around the gold-mine shaft with his divining rod.

He remarked thoughtfully: "Lucky the mine is just over the way for testing. The trouble with this business is it's difficult to check theories."

Maggie did not at first understand. She was thinking of water. She began: "But the well on the mine is just the same as this one. . . ."

She stopped, and her face changed as the outrageous suspicion filled her. "But Alec," she began indignantly, and saw him turning away, shutting out her carping doubtfulness. "But Alec," she exclaimed, suddenly furious, "surely you're not thinking of. . . ."

"People have been divining water for centuries, then why not gold?" he asked simply.

Maggie saw that it was all quite clear to him, like a religious faith, and that nothing she could say would reach him at all. She remained silent. The last shreds of her faith in him had dissolved. She was filled with bitterness, that final bitterness of a woman who has no life of her own outside her husband and children, and must see that life destroyed. For herself she did not mind. It was the children—they would pay for this lunacy.

When they next returned from school the boys found the atmosphere again changed. The exhilaration had gone out of their father; and he was grim and fighting. The divining rod had become like an extra limb, for he was never seen without it. Now it was made of iron wire because of some theory he had formed to do with the attraction between gold and iron. This theory, like all the others, was difficult to follow.

Maggie made no comment at all; and this young Dan accepted at face value, for it left him free to move cheerfully from one parent to the other without a sense of guilt.

But Paul was deeply disturbed. He *saw* his mother, with the new eyes of adolescence, for the first time, as distinct from *feeling* her, like a child, as the maternal image. He saw her critically as a fading tired woman with grey hair. He watched her at evening, sitting by the lamp, with the mending on her lap, in the rather shabby living-room. He saw how she knitted her brows and peered at the lamp to thread a needle; and how the sock or shirt might lie forgotten while she went off into some thought of her own, which kept her motionless, her face sad and pinched, for half an hour at a time, while her hands rubbed unconsciously in a nervous, hard movement over the stuff of her dress.

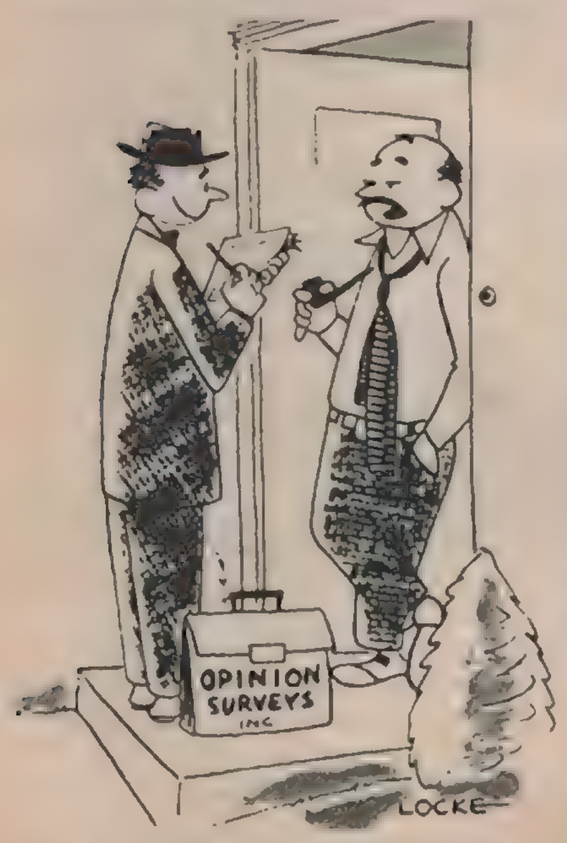
It is always a bad time when a son grows up and suddenly sees his mother as an elderly woman, but with Paul, this did not last longer than a few days, because at once the pathos and tiredness of her gripped him, and with it, a sullen anger against his father.

PAUL had become a young man when he was hardly into his teens; he took a clear look at his father and hated him for murdering the steadfast and cheerful Maggie. He looked, with that new vision, at the shabby house, at the neat but faded clothes of his mother, and at the neglected farm. That holiday he spent down on the lands with the labourers. He became a farmer then, when he was still a schoolboy. He accepted the responsibility for his mother, and discussed the farm with her when his father was out of the house.

To Maggie, the new protective gentleness of her son was sweet, and also very terrible, for now his future was settled. He already spoke of the farm as if he owned it; and from that time he lived through his terms at school like a penance, and waited for the holidays to resume his real living.

He wrote desperate letters from school to Maggie, full of appeals like: "Do please *make* father see to that fence before the rains, *please* mother, don't be soft and good-natured with him." But Alec was likely to be irritable about details such as fences; and Maggie would send back the counter-appeal: "Be patient, Paul; finish your studies first; there'll be plenty of time for farming."

Dan scraped through his scholarship examination with five marks to spare, and Maggie spoke to him very



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seriously. He appeared to be listening; but that half-ashamed mischief kept flickering over his face; and though he walked away, after the lecture, like a sober person, he had not gone ten yards before he broke into a run and went yelling into the bush after a bird.

These holidays Dan spent wholly over at the mine. His father had become too dry and self-absorbed, and his brother had grown beyond him. The miners liked this cheerful boy, and spoiled him with sweets, and gave him the run of the workings, and let him take rides in the iron lift down the mine shaft that descended slowly and creakingly through the underground passages where the mineboys worked in sodden grey loin-cloths, the water from the roof dripping and mingling with their running sweat.

At midday he loved to watch the labourers emerging from the cage into the sunlight, their eyes blinking in the unaccustomed glare. Then everyone stood by expectantly for the blasting. At the very last moment the last cage came racing up, groaning with the strain, and discharged the two men who had lit the fuse.

Almost immediately there was a soft vibrating roar from far under their feet; and the faces and bodies of the watchers relaxed. They yawned and stretched and drifted off in groups for their meal.

Dan would lean over the shaft, to catch the acrid whiff from the blasting; and then went off to eat with the two miners. The Ericson brothers were both bachelors, and lived in a little house with a native woman to cook for them.

It was unusual to have a woman working in the house, and this plump creature, who smiled and smiled, and gave him biscuits, and called him "darling," fascinated Dan. It was terrible cheek for a Kaffir, and a Kaffir woman at that, to call him "darling," and Dan would never dream of telling his mother, who had become so stern and watchful, and might forbid him to come again.

Dan was especially friendly with the elder brother, a big, gaunt man called James. James had a broad and bony face, and small grey eyes that gazed steadily from deep sockets. He stood loosely, bending from the shoulders, and his hands swung forward, so that there was something of a gorilla-look about him.

The younger brother, Fred, was slighter and more reserved.

Several times Alec appeared from the trenches down the ridge, walking straight and fast through the bush with his divining rod in his hand. He said to Dan: "So there you are, old son," and forgot him at once. He nodded to the two miners, and said "Do you mind?" and began abstractedly walking back and forth around the mine-shaft, with his rod. He was testing a theory.

SOMETIMES he appeared pleased, and said: "Looks as if I'm on the right track!" Or he might stand motionless in the hot sunlight, his old hat stuck on the back of his head, his face clenched in worried thought. "Contradictory!" he would mutter. "Can't make it out at all!" Then he would add briefly: "Thanks," nod again, and walk back, just as fast and determined, to the "experimental" trenches.

James and Fred watched him silently. Dan avoided their eyes. He knew they found his father ridiculous; and he would not show that he knew it. He would stare off into the bush, or down at the ground, and his face was flushed and unhappy. The miners, seeing it, would say kindly: "Your father'll make it yet, Dan."

"Do you think there could be gold?" Dan asked eagerly, for confirmation, not of the gold, but of his father's good sense.

"Why not?" James said. "There's a mine right here, isn't there? There's half a dozen small-workers round about."

The reef Alec was interested in lay diagonally over the slant of the ridge. It stretched for nearly a mile, jutting up three or four feet, like a rough ledge. At intervals, trenches had been dug across it; in places the ledge had been smashed away, by blasting.

Maggie came to look at it with Alec, one evening. She had no idea of the extent of the work. There were about twelve labourers, and the sound of picks on flinty earth sounded all around her. In shallow trenches she could see the top halves of some of the men, though others were out of sight under her feet. Maggie stood and stared, feeling sad and tired, computing what the labour must cost each month, let alone the money for gelignite and fuses and picks.

Alec was moving through the scrub with his wire. He had a new way of handling it. As a novice he had gripped the thing carefully, elbows tight at the sides, and walked cautiously as if he were balancing something; but now he strode fast over the ground, his loose bush-shirt flying about him, the wire held lightly in his fingers.

He was zigzagging back and forth in a series of twenty-foot stretches, and Maggie saw he was tracking the course of a reef, for at the centre of each of these stretches, the wire turned smartly down. She could not help thinking there was something rather perfunctory in it.

Suddenly she asked: "Let me try." Her husband's jaw fell with astonishment, but he said nothing. For the first time, Maggie held the magic wand.

"Walk along here," Alec ordered, frowning with concentration.

She walked as bidden. It was true that the wire seemed to tug and strain in her hands. She tried again, making her own course; and it appeared to her that if she pulled the two ends apart, the pressure tugged the point over and downwards, whereas if she held it without tension it remained unresponsive. Surely it could not be as simple as that? Surely Alec was not willing the thing as he wanted? He saw the doubt on her face, and said quickly: "Perhaps you haven't the magnetism."

"I dare say not," she agreed drily; and then asked quickly, trying to sound interested: "Is this water or a reef?"

"A reef."

"How do you know?"

ALEC's face brightened, rather pathetically, at this sign of interest, and he explained: "I've worked out that either an iron rod or a twig work equally well for water, but if you neutralize it with an iron nut on the end, there must be mineral, but I don't know whether gold or just any mineral."

She digested this, with difficulty; and then said: "You say an iron rod, Alec. But this is just galvanized iron. It might be made of anything really, steel or tin, or—or anything," she concluded lamely, her list of metals running out.

Alec's face was perturbed. She saw that this simple idea had never occurred to him. "It doesn't matter," he said at last. "The point is that it works. I've proved it on the reefs at the mine."

"But how do you know it isn't

THE HUMAN MACHINE

Be decent

MEN and women become decent and efficient only by behaving decently and efficiently. Lessons, exhortations, resolutions may stimulate, but cannot achieve results by themselves.

These come by a man always doing what is right, doing his best, working instead of idling, being truthful. Good instincts and ideas must, by constant practice, be transformed into habits.

by ROFFE THOMPSON

reacting to water? That mine is always having trouble with water; they say there's an underground river running parallel with the main reef."

He said indignantly: "I checked all that long ago." He took the wire, slipped an iron nut on each bent end, and gripped them tight. "Like that," he said. "The iron neutralizes, do you see?" She nodded, and he took off the iron nuts, and then she saw him reach in his pocket and take out his signet ring and put that on the wire.

"Alec, what are you doing?" asked Maggie, with a most curious feeling of dismay. She had given him that signet ring when they were married. She had bought it with her savings from working as a girl in her parents' shop, and it had been a great deal of money to her then. It was even now, for that matter. Here he was using it as an implement, not even stopping to think how she might feel about it. When he had finished what he was doing, he slipped the gold ring, together with the two iron nuts, back into his pocket.

"You'll lose it," she said anxiously.

He did not even hear her. He said worriedly: "If the iron neutralizes water, which I've proved, then the gold ring should neutralize gold. . . ." She did not follow his reasoning; though she could not doubt it had all been worked out logically.

Before they left at sundown, she walked over to one of the deep trenches and stood looking down. It was like a grave, she thought. The mouth was narrow, just a slit among the long straggling grass, with the mounds of rubble banked at the ends. The rosy evening sun glinted red on the grass-stems and flashed on the pebbles.

There was no sign of any reef at the bottom of the trench, and as Alec looked down, he was frowning. She could see that there should have been a reef. This trench proved something that upset the theory.

Some days later he remarked that he was taking the workers off the reef, to a new site. She did not care to ask where; but soon she saw a bustle of activity in the middle of the great mealie field. Yes, Alec had decided to sink a shaft just there. Alec, who had once grown angry if he found even a small stone in a farrow, which might nick the plough shares.

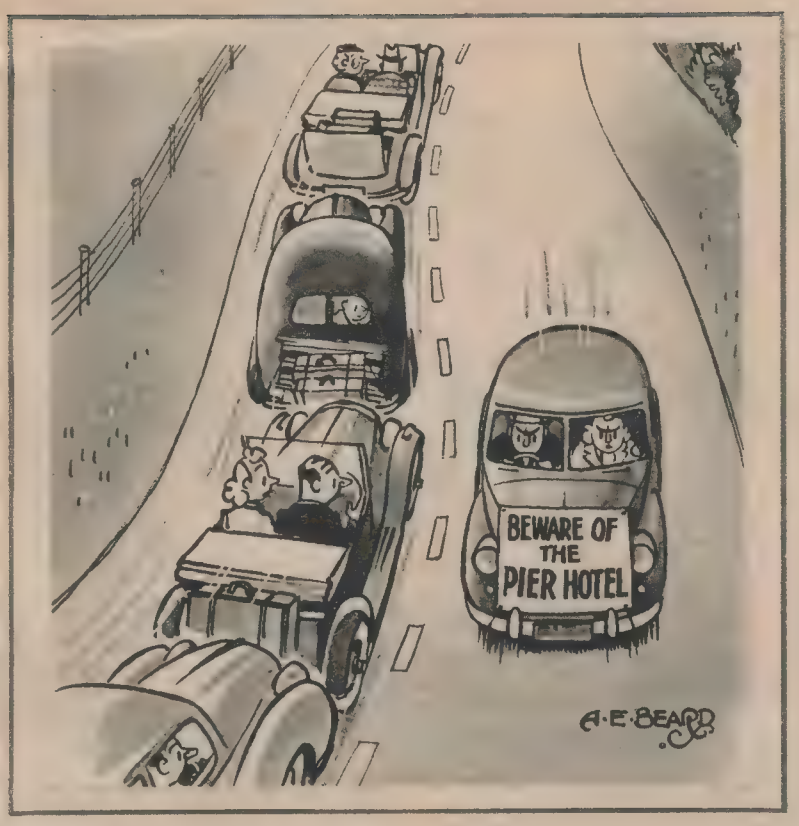
It was becoming a very expensive business. The cases of explosives came out from the station twice a month on the wagons. Maggie had to order whole boxes, instead of packets, of mining candles, from the store. And when Alec panned the samples, there were fifty or more, instead of half a dozen. He would be working at the water-tanks half the morning. Alec was wildly excited over this shaft; he thought he was on the verge of success. There were always a few grains of gold in the pan.

One day there was a long trail of it, which he estimated would be almost worth working. He sent a sample into the Mines Department for a proper test; and it came back confirmed.

But this was literally a flash in the pan, for nothing fresh happened; and soon that shaft was abandoned. Workers dragged an untidy straggle of barbed wire around the shaft, so that cattle should not stray into it; the ploughs detoured round it and in the centre of that once unbroken field stood a tall thicket of grass and scrub.

This made Paul furious when he came home for the holidays. He remonstrated with his father. Alec replied that it had been justified because from that shaft he had learned a great deal, and one must pay for knowledge. He spoke seriously, like a scientist.

Maggie remarked that the shaft had cost at least a hundred pounds to sink. and she hoped the knowledge was worth that much. It was the sort of protest she never made these days; she had only made it now because Paul was there to support her. As soon as Paul came home, she always had the most uncomfortable feeling that his mere presence tugged her away from her proper loyalty to her husband. She found herself becoming critical, even nagging; while the moment Paul had gone, she drifted back into a quiet acceptance and fatalism.



It was not long after that bitter remark that Alec finally lost his signet ring; and because it was necessary to work with a gold ring, asked for her wedding ring. She had never taken it off her finger since they married, but she slipped it off now, and handed it to him without a word. As far as she was concerned, it was a moment of spiritual divorce.

He lost that ring too, of course; but it did not matter, because not long afterwards he amended his theory, and gold rings became a thing of the past.

He was now using a rod of fine copper wire, with shreds of asbestos wound about it. Neither Maggie nor the boys asked for explanations, for there were pages of detailed notes on his farm desk, like mathematical formulae, and books about magnetic fields and currents, and the sympathy of metals; his philosophy had become the most extraordinary mixture of alchemy and magic and the latest scientific ideas.

It was in this room that Maggie confronted him with a letter from Dan's headmaster. The scholarship money was finished; was it intended that the boy should try for a fresh one to take him through university? If so, he must change his attitude, for while he was naturally intelligent, he "showed no real aptitude for serious application." If not, "there was no immediate necessity for reviewing the state of affairs"; but a list of employers was enclosed with whom Mrs. Barnes might care to communicate.

In short, the headmaster thought Dan had no chance of a scholarship. Maggie was bitterly angry. *Her* son become a mere clerk! She told Alec peremptorily that they must find the money to send Dan through university, even if it meant curtailing the mine work. Alec was engaged in making a fine diagram of his new shaft, in cross-section; and he lifted an irritated face. But he did not speak; he maintained the silence necessary when dealing with little-minded people.

Maggie would not give in. She argued, and even wept. Paul was leaving school at sixteen to manage the farm; Dan *must* be saved. She would do it, if she had to turn termagant and destroy her own husband. She made merciless analyses of what had been spent on dynamite and wages, and laid the accounts before Alec. She gave him no peace. This miserable time continued for some weeks. At first he was silent; then he began to defend himself; at last the defences crumbled and he shouted: "Oh, all *right* then, have it your own way! I'll find the money."

He went striding violently about the farm, his eyes resting anxiously on the things he had not really *seen* for so long—eroded soil, dragging fences, blocked drains, the state of ruin into which he had let the farm fall: and there was a cloud of fear on his face, like a child with night terrors.

It hurt Maggie to look at him; but she persisted, and thought she had won. She wrote proudly to the headmaster to say that Dan would go to the university, and there was no need to trouble about a scholarship.

But when, a few weeks later, she confronted Alec with the fact that the money for the fees would be due soon, he replied vaguely. It was not quite the old vagueness, for there was a fever and urgency in him which made Maggie look hopefully every day at the fields for signs of reorganization. There was none. Weeks passed, and once again Maggie went to him, asking him what his new plans were.

Alec replied irritably that he was doing what he could. What did she expect—a miracle to order? There was something familar in this tone that chilled her. She looked closely at him.

"Alec!" she demanded. "What exactly *are* you doing?"

He answered in that old, abstracted way: "I'm on to it now, Maggie. I'm certain I'll have it inside a month."

She choked down her reply. It was at the supper-table; and she put her handkerchief to her mouth and stumbled from the room. For some days she kept to her bed. It was not a real illness, but a temporary withdrawal from living. She pulled the curtains, and lay in the hot half-dark. The servants took her meals to her, for it seemed that she could not bear the sight of the two men.

Even Paul, who entered tentatively, after knocking and getting no answer, found her lying in her old dressing-gown, her eyes averted, her face flushed and exhausted; and she spoke to him in a cold and nervous way. But it was Paul who coaxed her back into the family, when Dan came home for the holidays.

Eventually she came back, took her place at the table, and behaved sensibly; but in a tight, controlled way that Dan could not bear.

Alec ignored it, for he was quite obsessed. He would come in for meals, his eyes glittering, and eat unconsciously, throwing out remarks like: "Next week I'll know for certain. I'm sure I've got it at last."

The others were infected, in spite of themselves. by his certainty. Each of them was thinking secretly: Suppose he's right? Suppose he has discovered something new? After all, great inventors are always laughed at to begin with!

There was a day when he came triumphantly in, loaded with pieces of rock. He laid them down on the table before Maggie, and said confidently: "Look at that!" She handled them, to please him; wondering why, this time, she half believed him. They were of rough, heavy, crumbling substance, like a rusty honeycomb. She said: "Is this what you wanted?"

"You'll see," said Alec proudly, and ordered Dan to come with him to the shaft, to help carry more samples. Dan went, with all his old eagerness. They returned loaded. Each piece of rock was numbered, according to the part of the reef it was taken from. Half of each was crushed, and father and son stood panning all the afternoon.

Paul came to Maggie and said, reluctantly interested: "They seem to be certain, Mother. . . ." He was appealing to her to come and look. Silently she rose, and went with him to the water-tanks. Alec gave her a defiant stare and thrust the pan over to her. She looked for gold. The trail of grit along the black metal bottom seemed to her much as usual, and she could see no gold-grits at all. Alec explained eagerly: "It often happens that the gold is mixed with other metals and doesn't show."

She looked, with a listless irony, over at Dan, but he nodded seriously. She accepted it from him, for he knew quite a lot, by now.

Alec saw that she disbelieved him, but would trust his son, and gave her a baffled angry look; and she hastened to smooth things over. "Show me!" she asked; and he ran his thumb-nail along a streak of rusty-coloured stuff, about two inches long, that dragged heavy behind the other silt.

"If that's gold," said Alec, "then it must be going ounces to the ton, really rich!"

"I see," she said, seriously. A flicker of hope rose in her; and unconsciously she looked over at Paul, her ally. She could see he was interested, too. If this madness turned out to be no madness at all. . . .

"What are you going to do now?" she asked.

"I'm sending all these samples to the department, for testing."

"*All* of them?" She checked the protests; but she was thinking, *that will cost at least ten pounds.* "And when will you hear?"

"In about a week."

Her eyes met Paul's again; and the two went indoors, leaving Alec and Dan to finish the panning. Paul said, with grudging enthusiasm: "You know, Mother, if it's true. . . ."

"*If*. . . ." she scoffed.

"But he says, if this works, it means he can divine *anything*! He says governments will be sending for him to divine their coal-fields, water, everything!"

"But Paul," she said wearily, "they can find coal-fields and minerals with scientific instruments." She even felt a little guilty at damping the boy in this way.

"Can they?" he asked doubtfully. It sounded rather dull. "But, Mother, even if he can't divine, and it's all nonsense, we'll have a rich mine on the farm."

"That won't satisfy your father," she said grimly. "He'll rest at nothing less than a universal theory."

The rocks were sent off that afternoon to the station; and now they were all restless and eager, even Maggie. The whole family went to examine this vital shaft one afternoon. It was in a thick patch of bush. They walked along a native path to reach the rough clearing, where a simple windlass and swinging iron bucket marked the shaft. Maggie leaned over. She could see nothing at first. For a short distance the circular hole plunged rockily; then there was an occasional flash of light from a faceted pebble; then a terrifying darkness.

But as she looked there was a glow of light far below, and she could see the

tiny form of a man black against a lit rock face.

"How deep?" she asked, shuddering a little.

"Over a hundred, now,'" said Alec casually. "I'll just go down and have a look."

The natives swung the bucket out into the centre of the shaft, and Alec thrust one leg in, clinging to the rope with an arm, and using an arm and a leg to fend off the walls, as the rope unwound him down into the blackness. Maggie found it horrifying to watch. She pulled her head back from the shaft, but the boys lay on their stomachs and peered over, fascinated.

At last Alec came up again. He scrambled lightly from the rocking bucket to safety, and Maggie suppressed a sigh of relief.

"You should see that reef," he said proudly. "It's three feet wide. I've cross-cut in four places, and it doesn't break at all."

Maggie was thinking: Only three days of waiting gone!

They were all waiting now, in a condition of hallucinatory calmness, for the result to come back from the Assay Department. When only five days had passed, Alec said: "Let's send the boy in for the post." Usually they only sent twice a week for letters.

Next day the houseboy went again; but there was nothing yet. And now a week had passed, and the whole family was hanging helplessly about the house, watching for the postboy.

Eight days. Alec could not work, could not eat; the boys, even Paul, were looking over the fields to where the shaft was, and saying: "Won't it be funny to have a big mine just down there, on our farm! There'll be a town soon, and just think what this land will be worth then!"

"Yes," Maggie assented, allowing herself to become completely mad, with the others. She was thinking: We can buy a proper big farm for Paul, and Dan can be what he likes. All kinds of half-suppressed longings were flooding up in her. It would be nice to have good clothes again; to buy nice linen, instead of the washed-out stuff they had been using for years; and perhaps she would go to the doctor, and he would prescribe a holiday, and they could all go back to Scotland for a year and see the family and. . . .

"I wonder what rainy days cost us, on an average?"

Nine days. The tension was no longer pleasantly exciting. Paul and Dan quarrelled and were not on speaking terms. It appeared that Paul thought this soil was too good to be wasted on a town, and they must refuse to sell, no matter what price was offered. A mine, yes, but not a town into the bargain. Dan was thinking of a city the size of Johannesburg, that would swallow not only this farm, but hundreds of others.

Maggie told them sharply not to count their chickens before the eggs were even laid; and they laughed and said she had no imagination.

The tenth day was a regular mail-day. If there was no letter, then Alec said he would telephone the department; but this was foolish, for they must deal with hundreds of samples, and could not be expected to make special arrangements. But Alec said: "I'm surprised they haven't telephoned before; just like a government department not to see the importance of something like this!"

The post was late. They sat on the darkening veranda, gazing down the road. When the man came at last, there was still no letter.

And now there had come a feeling of anticlimax. Maggie found a private belief confirmed, namely that nothing could happen to this family in neat, tidy events. Everything always muddled itself along. Even if there is gold, she thought secretly, there'll be trouble with selling it, and it will all take months, perhaps years.

The eleventh day was a long torture. Alec sat in his office, anxiously checking his calculations, drinking cup after cup of strong tea. The boys pretended to read, and yawned and bickered till Maggie lost her temper with them.

The house-boy, now rather bad-tempered at these repeated daily trips of seven miles on foot each way, set off late after lunch to the station. They all tried to sleep, to make the time pass. When the sun was hanging just over the horizon, they again arranged themselves on the veranda to wait. The sun sank, and Maggie telephoned the station. Yes, the train was two hours late.

They ate supper in a tense silence, and went back to the veranda. The moon flooded everything with that weird light which made the mealie-fields sway like a sea all around them.

At last Dan shouted: "Here he comes!" And now, when they could see the swinging hurricane lamp, that sent a faint red flicker across the bright moonlight, they could hardly bring themselves to move. They were thinking: It needn't be today, after all—perhaps we'll have this awful waiting tomorrow, too. . . .

The houseboy handed in the sack. Maggie took it, removed the bundle of letters, and gave them to Alec. She could see a government envelope. She was feeling sick, and the boys were silent and white. Alec dropped the letters and picked them up clumsily. He made several attempts to open the envelope, and at last ripped it off, tearing the letter itself.

To be concluded next week

THE LONELY BANDIT

Continued from page 24

if you should see *her*, tell her from me that it may be a year before we meet, but no longer, if I can help it."

"I will tell her," said Nazim. He rose and saluted them, and as the curtains of the doorway fell behind him, the Khan turned to Part'n Deen.

"I take pride in that boy," he said complacently. "It amuses me to think that Marsden probably does likewise."

Part'n Deen said nothing. He was thinking: I must have been about Nazim's age that winter when, with Hamid and a dozen others, I cleaned out the silver market at Agra and they posted the first reward for my head. . . .

The day passed in a long swoon of heat, and Part'n Deen, sitting on his doorstep overlooking the courtyard, watched the hoopoes arch their crest feathers as they strutted in the shade of the jacaranda tree. Veiled women of the Khan's household glided past him on their way to the well, and as he courteously averted his gaze, he felt theirs taking him in. Did they, he wondered, know who he was—Part'n Deen, the famous bandit, with a price on his head; or did they, like the rest of the village, accept him as they accepted everything, unquestioningly, since he was the friend and guest of their master, the Khan?

The Khan came to sit beside him, and they talked of the past and its triumphs, and of the future and its uncertainties. It had been decided that they—Part'n Deen and the Khan—should leave next day for the province of Sind. They would drive in the Khan's carriage to the nearest railway station and take a train from there. Part'n Deen was to disguise himself as a woman, wearing a *burka*, the sack-like garment worn by Moslem ladies when they travel, which covers the entire body, leaving only two small holes for the eyes. As one of the Khan's ladies, he would pass unchallenged by anyone who might prove inquisitive.

It was a trick that had been played before by others, and the police were thoroughly familiar with it, but the Khan was a landowner of great prestige and known to be a friend of Marsden's; as such, his movements and those of his family were not likely to be questioned. Once Part'n Deen was in Sind, the chances of recognition and betrayal would be slight, and he would be free to plot and plan for the future. True, the ring had closed remorselessly around his wife and his friends. Many of them were lost to him, for the time being, at any rate; some perhaps for ever, for the law would have no mercy on the killers among them, as it would have none on their leader, were he to fall into Marsden's hands.

Well, Part'n Deen had foiled Marsden as, before that, he had foiled others. Of the many Englishmen who had at one time and another bent their wits and energies to tracking him down, Part'n Deen had actually met only one face to face.

He had never seen Marsden, and yet he felt that he knew him best of all.

"A man of middle height," the Khan had said, describing the policeman, "slight of build, like yourself, and of a peculiar grace. You would know him anywhere by his manner of walking, and by his eyes, which are of an unusual shade of blue."

"And young," Part'n Deen mused. "Younger than I by almost twenty years."

"But of formidable ambition," the Khan added, admiringly. "His superiors consider him arrogant. It is well known that he has bested them in many fields—in the hunting of game, for instance. He is a passionate hunter and a famous shot, known to have killed a running antelope at five hundred yards, when others missed. It is common knowledge that some of his colleagues would not be sorry to see him fail in this pursuit of you."

"Nevertheless," Part'n Deen said, "the government would be bound to reward him for my capture, would it not?"

"The government does not give money rewards to officers in its service," the Khan said.

"A medal? But surely I am worth a medal!"

"Nor medals."

"Ah, promotion, then?"

"Promotion, certainly, and possibly a gift of plate, suitably inscribed. A silver salver and a cup big enough to boil a man's head."

Evening came at last, and Part'n Deen went to the gate to watch the cattle returning across the plain. It was the hour which villagers call the Hour of Cow Dust, and he sniffed it with pleasure, thinking: Tomorrow by this time we shall be on our way, and I shall not see Koj again for months, perhaps for years.

His gaze lingered on the courtyard with its great tree and the green shadow cast by the wellhead; then he turned once more to watch the Khan's buffaloes moving into the walled pen which adjoined the courtyard where he stood. Dust settled slowly over the landscape below the ascending smoke of evening fires, and the sun, wilting like one of Marsden's roses, fell behind the edge of the plain and disappeared. . . .

He slept that night more soundly than he had for many months, waking once before dawn to hear the sound of bullock carts creaking along the highway in the distance, and he pictured the familiar cavalcade with its load of grain and hides, the drivers asleep in their blankets, secure in the homing instinct of their beasts. When he woke again he found the Khan's son, Ahmed, standing beside his bed.

"Ahmed! What is it?" he said.

"Marsden is here."

"Marsden?"

He sprang out of bed and dressed, winding his turban swiftly round his head. He was as wide awake as though he had never slept, every aroused sense telling him how altered was the world from the one to which he had bidden good night. Reaching under the bed, he pulled out his rifle and made sure it was loaded.

"They came at dawn," Ahmed whispered, "hidden in bullock carts. And they have surrounded the village. Every exit, every road is barred. But they have not yet entered our house, and my father sent me to warn you. He has detained Marsden outside the gate. Listen; you can hear them."

Part'n Deen went to the window and opened it cautiously. The sound of voices raised in argument reached him faintly from the darkness round the corner, but below him a narrow drain which separted his room from the wall of the cattle pen lay empty and inviting.

He turned quickly to the boy. "Listen to me," he said. "Listen carefully and do what I tell you. There is a chance, a bare chance, no more. Now listen . . ."

In the smoky light of flares and oil lanterns, with here and there the glitter of brassbound staves and the sharper gleam of steel, Marsden's constables searched every house and hut, every granary and godown, every lane and alley and loft. They trained their lights into the branches of trees and down into the cylindrical blackness of wells, until the village had been combed as clean as a baby's head, and in their pens the cattle, smelling strangers, snorted in a growing rage of disquiet.

As a sallow dawn lightened the sky, chairs were brought into the courtyard, and here Marsden sat with the Khan and the Khan's two sons. Beyond the gate, the villagers had been marshalled in rows. Men, women and children squatted down on their heels and waited with the invincible patience of their kind—all but the family of the Khan, which, with the exception of his sons, remained within the curtained fastness of the house. The door of the room where the bandit had slept stood innocently open, its string bedstead visible in the gloom.

Nazim, in a fresh uniform and bright new turban, had stationed himself behind Marsden's chair. After a single venomous glance, the Khan ignored him and turned to Marsden. "Sahib, never

have you been so mistaken. Part'n Deen is not here, nor has he been here."

His night's beard was soft round Marsden's mouth and chin, but his eyes were sharply blue. "I'm sorry, Khan Sahi but it looks as if I will have to search the zenana."

"Search the women's quarters? Over my son's bodies, and mine!"

"Let us dispense with the melodrama," Marsden begged him. "I suggest that your ladies come out wearing their *burkas* and pass before me in single file, so that I may see their hands in passing."

"No, sahib."

"Very well, their bare feet, then."

"No."

"But I say yes!" Marsden's words had the bite of a whiplash, and Nazim smiled.

Pale with anger, the Khan lowered his eyes. He said slowly, "I would never have expected this outrage from you, sahib."

"Nor I such treachery from you."

"So you take this whippersnapper's word against mine, and call it treachery?" the Khan said.

"Come, Khan Sahib. Your ladies have nothing to fear. I shall confine my gaze to their feet, I promise you."

"You are, then, a connoisseur of feminine feet, sahib?"

"You would be wiser to spare your wit," Marsden retorted.

The Khan rose and, followed by his sons, went into the house.

MARSDEN lighted a cigarette. He said to Nazim, "My own feeling is that he got away last night."

"But I swear that when I saw him, talked with him, there was no suspicion. He was going to spend the night here. Why should he have flown?"

"He has the instinct for escape. And we've even looked in the wells. There is no place left except the Khan's beard!"

"And the zenana."

"I doubt that Part'n Deen would condescend to that old trick."

The Khan reappeared, followed by a weird file of what resembled perambulating bundles. As the frightened procession moved past Marsden, he fastened his gaze on its feet—small and brown and unmistakably the feet of women. Seen thus, amputated from their owners by the dragging hems of their hideous garments, the feet possessed extraordinary significance and charm. Marsden felt that he was seeing human feet for the first time, and as they shuffled self-consciously past his chair, he wondered what might be passing through the shrouded heads above them—vengeance, indignation, shame? Or could it be—in the visibly young, and delicately tended—could it be, perhaps, some gleam of excitement and curiosity, a throb of gratitude for this break in the interminable boredom of their lives?

When the last of the Khan's ladies had passed before Marsden and had gone to join her companions in a multicoloured huddle beside the door, Nazim and a dozen constables entered the house to complete their search. Half an hour later they reappeared empty-handed. The Khan bestowed a sardonic smile impartially on the entire group.

Marden felt, then, the sudden fatigue which for the past two years had seemed to march step by step with every failure. Fatigue crawled in his marrow, sickening him. He left the courtyard and found himself confronting the rows of squatting villagers. Dumbly, they looked at him or humbly looked away. These, he reminded himself bitterly, were the innocent ones, without whom society could no more exist than it could subsist without the cattle that bawled disconsolately, neglected, in the pens at his back. The sound reproached him, as the humble, uplifted faces of the villagers reproached him.

"Go and let your beasts out to pasture," he told them brusquely. "The children can attend to them as usual. You others return to your houses and remain there until further orders."

They dispersed in silence and, as the pens were opened and the cattle came streaming forth, Marsden stood with Nazim at his side, watching the beasts move on to the plain, stirring the dust into clouds behind them. He sighed. "Well, I know that the circle is closed so tight that there cannot be another hiding place in the whole district. Nazim, my boy, it has taken two years, special government powers, reinforcements from three provinces, and God knows how much money in rewards and bribes . . . We've got his gang, even his wife. I could have sworn that this time we had *him*."

Nazim stared disconsolately at the ground.

"Perhaps," Marsden mused aloud, "perhaps if I had come yesterday, instead of sending you . . . But then he would surely have got wind of it and vanished like quicksilver. I would have had to apologize to the Khan." He frowned. "I shall probably end by apologizing to the old blackguard anyway. Oh, Nazim!"

"Sahib, on my head!"

"Yes, yes, I believe you."

Around them the village stood deserted except for a dog scratching itself in the dust under a tree. Marsden had a glimpse of his constables dispersed between the lentil fields and the plain, and of others, turbaned like poppies, standing at ease at a corner of the village street.

The cattle had fanned out, each herd with its diminutive protector, and the white land moved under the gathering heat and seemed to drift upward toward the sun.

Marsden felt the silence and thought of other villages that he had come on after Part'n Deen had done with them, and he wondered: Had I followed his method—as indeed, I sometimes have!—would we be quits at this moment?

Suppose now I were to toss my lighted cigarette into that poor farmer's thatch, might I perhaps smoke out the elusive devil after all?

Meeting Nazim's eyes, he saw his question mirrored in them and shook his head. Much as they resembled each other, he and Part'n Deen, Marsden knew that he could not bring the silence of desolation on the village of Koj.

SILENCE, the silence of Koj . . . it was broken behind him in a sudden bellowing from the cattle pen of the Khan, the complaints of pampered beasts at a loss to account for their neglect. All the cattle in the village had been driven out to pasture, but the Khan's remained, and as the immemorial sound worked into his consciousness, Marsden experienced a peculiar throb of excitement in the pit of his stomach. He turned slowly to Nazim.

"The Khan's cattle are still penned, yet his servants heard me give permission to release them."

"Shall I go and tell them again?" Nazim asked indifferently.

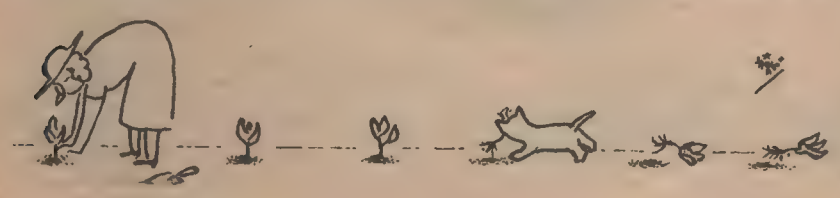
"Did you search the pens—all of them?" Marsden asked.

"All. That is, as well as we could. The Khan's son warned us to be careful of his pen, because a cow had just calved there and was apt to be vicious."

"The Khan's son warned you?"

Nazim stared at him with growing intentness. "There was no one in that pen, sahib, so far as we could see for the beasts milling about in it."

Marsden said in a normal voice, "There is only one other exit, and that



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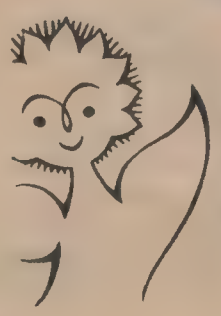

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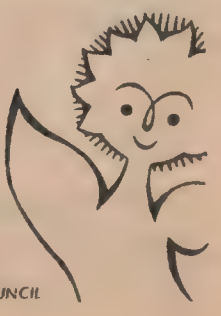

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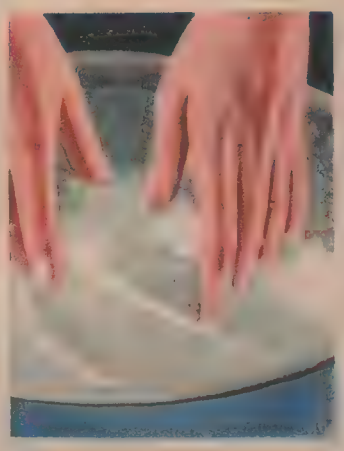

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is through the drain at the rear. Is that guarded?"

"I think so."

"Go and make sure. I am going to let the cattle out from this side."

"But you will be alone—and if he should be armed?"

"Do as I tell you."

Nazim walked reluctantly away, and Marsden, reaching in his pocket, felt the revolver that rested against his thigh. He lighted another cigarette and walked slowly to the cattle pen, the walls of which stood higher than a man's head. Lifting the cross-bar from its slot, he pulled the gate open, and the Khan's buffaloes came lumbering out, bellowing indignantly, and made off across the plain with their calves frisking after them.

There was a moment's pause, then Marsden stepped back and slipped his hand into his pocket as a slight, turbaned figure walked out of the empty pen carrying an old-fashioned English rifle held horizontally before it. Approaching Marsden, the man stooped and laid the weapon at the policeman's feet in the traditional gesture of submission. He would have prostrated himself, but Marsden restrained him. For a moment the two men confronted each other in silence. A long, intent glance passed between them, then Marsden said slowly, "That was clever of you, Part'n Deen. If the cattle had remained silent, I might have overlooked the Khan's buffalo pen and so lost another round to you."

Part'n Deen smiled. "The choice was a narrow one, sahib."

"For people like you and me, it is always narrow. But you might, as a parting gesture, have taken a shot at me as I opened the gate."

"To be shot in turn by your men?"

"True. In that case we would not have met, and after all, this time it would have been a pity, don't you think?"

Both laughed, and at the sound the silence was broken, doors were opened, and the villagers came out to verify with their own eyes what their ears refused to believe.

THE carriage that was to have taken the Khan and his visitor to the station was commandeered later that afternoon to carry Marsden and his prisoner back along the road to Agra. The Khan, his sons and certain others suspected of complicity in harbouring the notorious bandit, were to follow by cart, with an armed escort of Marsden's police.

Marsden and Part'n Deen rode on the rear seat of the carriage which was drawn by the Khan's horses, with Nazim on the box at the driver's side. Marsden had, out of some quixotic whim, refused to handcuff his captive and they sat together like old friends, smoking Marsden's cigarettes and reviewing the events of the past two years.

"One thing that I do not understand," Part'n Deen said, "is why you should have suspected the Khan. After all, he is a person of some distinction and has never given you cause for suspicion."

"It has seemed to me for some time," Marsden replied, "that the Khan's village was enjoying a rather marked freedom from your distinguished attentions."

"Ah, but it also had the honour of *your* protection, sahib, had it not?"

"So had certain others—Manud, for example—and they did not fare so well," Marsden reminded his prisoner.

Part'n Deen was silent for a moment. His eyes, bright and alert above his black beard, gazed almost caressingly at the countryside.

"That talk," he said presently, "the talk of your going to Lucknow—it was a ruse, was it not?"

"To make you believe I was on the wrong scent, yes."

There was another pause; then Part'n Deen inquired, with some embarrassment, "The woman—my wife. She is well?"

"She is well and in good hands."

"She is innocent, sahib."

"Yes," Marsden said gently. "I will do my best for her."

Glancing at young Nazim's back, the bandit said abruptly, "He should go far, that boy of yours. An accomplished liar and cheat."

Marsden laughed. "I admit I was surprised that you should have trusted him."

"I didn't, at first, but loneliness makes a man stupid at times."

"I hoped that it would work that way," Marsden said.

The bandit looked at him curiously. "You have felt it yourself, then?"

"Loneliness? I'm seldom without it."

"But this success will bring its reward, surely?" Part'n Deen said. "Promotion, a gift of plate suitably inscribed with the date of my capture? By the way, what is today, sahib?"

"November the thirtieth, nineteen twenty-eight."

"That date and my name," Part'n Deen said, "will live in your fame long after my body has stopped twisting at the end of a rope."

The policeman answered with constraint: "You have been ruthless, utterly without compunction. Sixteen villages in this district pillaged and burned to the ground, their people killed or made homeless. Surely you cannot expect——"

"Pardon? No sahib. Pardon is something that has never entered into my calculations."

He gazed once more at the white landscape broken by the trees and at a small herd of antelope which moved in the distance, like a mirage. But the thought that moved through his mind was no mirage. Vivid and alive, it gleamed in his eyes and was instantly veiled.

MARSDEN did not see it. This was his hour of triumph, yet for some reason he could feel little elation. His sense of achievement was contradictory, to be shared, if at all, only by the man at his side. He felt a kind of tenderness for this man, and a great regret and melancholy that their strange rivalry should be over at last.

The carriage rolled comfortably down a white road between trees in whose shade a few travellers were resting from the heat. Monkeys played in the branches and small boys grazed their goats in the ditches alongside. It was a picture scarcely changed through the centuries, one which the Emperor Akbar might have seen four hundred years before as he rode his great horse past the conical milestone he had erected to mark the distance from point to point of his empire.

And it was a scene that Part'n Deen knew well, as well as he knew the palm of his hand.

He sat quietly gazing around him at the plain on one side of the road and the lentil fields on the other, a sea of luxuriant green standing as high as a man's head. Beyond the fields the plain began again, broken into gullies, dried watercourses, and caves familiar to him through the years. These caves had been his refuge often enough; he could have found his way to them blindfold.

"Sahib," he said suddenly, smiling, "I have just remembered a dream."

"Yes?"

"Do you ever dream, sahib?"

"Of course, though I can't say that I always remember my dreams."

"Ah, but one should remember one's dreams, for how else can one expect to read them aright?"

"As portents, you mean?" Marsden asked, absently.

"Prophecy is a happier word."

"And your dream?" Marsden asked courteously. "What was it about?"

"I dreamed that I was hunting antelope and that the does were up to their usual tricks, trying to lure me away from their lord." He glanced at Marsden. "They tell me you are a great hunter, sahib—that you have killed many buck, some of the finest heads in the country."

"I hold the record for this district," Marsden replied, unable to keep the satisfaction out of his voice, for in the realm of sport, at any rate, his sense of achievement was always unalloyed. He smiled at his companion. "So you, too, are familiar with the ways of the antelope?"

"I have studied them," Part'n Deen replied. He stared at the waving tops of the lentil fields and felt his dream beckoning, saw branches opening out into a green sanctuary with the illimitable plains beyond. Once on the plain, he would have a chance. A narrow choice, true, but had not Marsden himself declared that for such as he the choice must always be a narrow one?

The carriage had passed Akbar's fifth milestone when a small herd of does crossed the road before them and disappeared into the lentil fields to the left. Leaning forward, Part'n Deen pointed across Marsden's chest to the plain on the right. "See there," he murmured. "See the buck!"

Marsden turned his head and saw an antelope standing in the great light of the afternoon sun, and at that moment Part'n Deen leaped from the carriage and sped across the open space on the left, between the road and the field.

Marsden drew his revolver, trained it on the flying figure, and shot twice.

Part'n Deen fell and lay still, his white turban uncoiled beside him, the buck, bounding at the shot, vanishing like a ghost into the sun. THE END

"Did'ums want to show off his nice new collar and lead . . . ?"

THE KILLER IN FLAT TEN

Continued from page 14

the uproar of the storm, Martha started violently and for some seconds they stared at each other while the bell rang on. "You may answer it," he said then.

She rose and crossed to the small table where the telephone stood and picked up the receiver. It was Jean. "Well, darling," came the bright, teasing voice, "was he lurking with murder in his eyes like I said?"

"Yes, Jean," she replied, "exactly like you said."

"Darling, you sound so odd." Jean's tone had changed. "Honestly, I don't like the idea of your glooming alone in that flat, so listen. Matron says I can break rules and have you along for a drink. Now."

Martha took a deep breath and said. "Afraid I can't come, Jean dear. Maybe they'll let you have my glass too, and you could drink it for me. And when you see Davy say hallo from me and all my love." She rang off.

Only for a second had the phone seemed to offer a chance of rescue. Then she had realized that the moment she started calling for help the bullet would smack through her back. Even if help arrived, even if it got as far as the door, there would be only two bodies, still warm, on the Kashmiri carpet when the door opened.

When she sat again at the small table, in obedience to his gesture, there was a photograph lying on it, between them. Once again Martha saw the flowerlike beauty of the face that had shot into the headlights of Andrew's car. Daya Ram was gazing at it with such consuming adoration that she could not bear to see it. She asked, "Where is Commander Milne?"

HE told her: "At the bottom of the sea. I arranged a sailor's death for him."

"Poor Rob!" Her voice trembled. "And poor Rosemary! They had only two months together."

"We had only two days," he said softly.

"And you're not allowing me even that."

As his dark brows rose in inquiry she told him, "I was to have been married the day after tomorrow."

His eyes stared deep into hers. "Then you understand," he said slowly.

"Yes," she said, and that was true. She was learning now what loss meant, loss of all that gave life meaning. She felt strangely close to him, to the broken heart of him if not the broken mind. She felt no hatred any more and now, suddenly, even her fear lost its sharpest edge. The first inklings of a plan were stirring in the dark coils of her mind.

The storm was moving south. From a distance over the harbour came a few

THE DESPERATE MISSION OF SU MEI

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Woman

OUT THURS. SEPT. 10

muffled thunderclaps, like the sobs of a small child who had stopped crying. The downpour had lost its violence. To hope for help had been useless from the first. But could she yet help herself?

He looked at his watch.

"Two minutes more and the moon will rise," he said. "Then will be the moment for us to die. I made my vow as the moon rose and that is when I shall keep the last details of it."

Martha had a plan now, but had she nerve enough to stage it? She felt as if she were clinging to a narrow ledge over an abyss while violent winds fought to throw her down.

After closing her eyes and asking for strength, she said, looking down at the photo of Lakshami, "I think she must have loved you very much." She stole a glance at him through her eyelashes. He held his left wrist arched and something told her that it was now the second hand of his watch that he was frowning over so closely.

The revolver rose and pointed at her breast.

"I think," she went on, still gazing down at the photo, "she must have been thinking of you in the moment that picture was taken. Don't you think so?"

And yes, she had guessed correctly. His eyes could not resist the photograph, the face he had loved so tragically. They turned for a last glance of agonized tenderness at its delicate beauty, and in that second Martha acted.

She sprang forward, and her hand, armed with despairing strength, seized the gun. Before he could snap out of the trance into which her words and the face of his lost bride had betrayed him and summon his reserve of maniacal strength, the black gun had been wrested from his hold. Martha, closing her eyes, aimed it at the window and fired a single shot.

A single shot. Then, as he came at her with his mad, tragic face contorted, she turned the gun around and held it out to him. When he snatched it from her she spun round, closed her eyes again, clamped her hands over her ears and whispered, "Goodbye, Davy," in case it was goodbye.

Suspense then, tearing a great wound in her consciousness for three terrible seconds and then she stiffened at the report of the second shot.

A sob like a small child's burst her lips, and she stumbled to the door, blind with tears and groping desperately for the lock. . . .

"You took a fearful chance," the police officer protested when she'd told her story half an hour later. "A fearful chance. Passing a loaded gun to a homicidal maniac and turning your back on him! Why didn't you throw it out of the window? Or hold him up with it till my chaps got there? They'd just pulled up their patrol car outside when you fired; after Mrs. Sanderson rang the station I sent them along to see how you were."

Martha said, "I understood him, you see. He had two shots left, one for me and one for himself—one for revenge the other for death. And I was sure he wanted death more than revenge, if he couldn't have both.

"It seems an odd thing to say after what he did to my friends, but when the time came I wanted to help him. So I fired the shot he'd intended for me . . . and gave him back the bullet he'd saved for himself. Surely he's better off now than waiting to be condemned to a lifetime in a madhouse."

"He was mad, all right," the officer put in grimly.

"It wasn't his mind I understood," she said quietly, "but his heart. That was broken, too."

He didn't look sympathetic enough for her to complete her explanation. It was quite a simple one, in fact. Merely that she loved as Daya Ram had loved.

And that night, when she had taken out again the golden future she had folded away and saw it stretch magically again before her, the future with Davy, she drifted smiling into sleep. But smiling on a tear-stained pillow.

Tears for three friends who wouldn't be at her wedding now. For three friends . . . and one enemy. THE END

"Drop whatever you're doing. We're going out to dinner"

ABOVE US THE WAVES

Continued from page 17

charge, too, had flooded its buoyancy chambers. There could be only one remedy. The sardonic witticisms of the crew, struggling to keep the craft alive, hid deep disappointment as McFarlane brought X8 to the surface.

McFarlane had just experienced the shattering power of the charge, and both he and Seanymph's commander shared a healthy distrust of the "safe" setting. They decided, accordingly, to time the charge to fire in two hours' time. When this was done the "cargo" was released and the two vessels proceeded away from the vicinity as fast as they could. For some reasons unknown, the submarine managed to tow X8 only three and a half miles before the explosion. The force of the detonation, spreading through the water, had a dramatic and disastrous effect on the small submarine.

It was as if X8 had been hurled against a wall. The "Wet and Dry"—or escape—compartment was flooded. Doors were jammed, pipes fractured; the diving controls were rendered unusable. Looking ruefully at the wreckage, the crew drew some comfort from the thought of what was in store for the Tirpitz and Scharnhorst.

There was now no question of the Lützow's being attacked; on the morning of the eighteenth, McFarlane and his crew collected their personal kit and paddled over to Seanymph after sending their emasculated craft to her last and deepest dive. With two midgets sunk, the force had already lost a third of its strength.

Attack Crews Took Over

In spite of these disasters the flotilla had made good progress. By dusk on the eighteenth the sea had subsided sensibly and Lieutenant Godfrey Place decided to leave Stubborn with his operational crew and take over command of X7. The three other midgets deferred this operation till the next day, by which time the weather was almost calm. The transfers were successfully carried out on the night of the nineteenth, when the final phase of the operation was about to begin.

The six submarines, four of them with their midgets still in tow, were now about seventy miles west of Söröy, the long, jagged island which lies to the north and can be said to form the outer defences of the entrance to Alten Fjord. Between Söröy and three more islands to the south—the inner guardians of the fjord—is the five-to-seven-mile wide stretch of water known as Söröy Sound. It was into this channel that the midgets would have to make their way. The sound was known to be heavily mined and was at all times frequented by traffic proceeding to the port of Hammerfest at the northern entrance to Alten Fjord.

September 20 was calm. The big submarines, all in their various patrol sectors, were closing the coast slowly. The time was spent in final preparations. In the midgets, the crews plotted their attacks for the hundredth time and checked and rechecked their machinery. They found little to do, for the craft had been handed over in almost perfect condition.

Early in the morning Stubborn had a dangerous experience with a floating mine. The mine passed clear of the big submarine but, fouling its mooring wire on the tow attached to X7, it slid along the hawser to become impaled on the bows of the midget. The sinister grating of the wire and the dull thump of the mine hitting the pressure hull brought Godfrey Place out of his hatch like a jack-in-the-box. The mine was firmly stuck; rather like a cow fondling a tree, it was lazily stropping one of its horns against the midget's casing.

Kicked Floating Mine

Place took the boldest and most convenient course—he stuck out a leg and kicked the mine clear. As it went safely astern he remarked to his first lieutenant that it was the first time he had booted a mine on its horns. This cool and instant decision was typical of Godfrey Place; his crew were to need his nerve before long.

At 8 p.m. on September 20 the force went into action when the big submarines, thirty miles from the coast, released their charges. It was a fine night, with a moderate sea, and the X-craft made good going. X6 and X7, two of the three craft allotted to the Tirpitz, were to keep amazingly close together throughout the operation, although never in real contact with each other. They had a trouble-free run through the minefields round the island during the night of the twentieth and, as dawn broke, Söröy was left astern and the midgets entered the smaller Stjern Sound, a narrow passage of fifteen miles that would lead them directly into Alten Fjord. Their quarry was still thirty difficult miles away.

If Godfrey Place had ever imagined the North Norwegian Skerries as a deserted expanse of scree and water mainly inhabited by bird-watchers, he was quickly disillusioned. The day of the twenty-first was spent in dodging vessels of every description. There were patrol and motor boats, drifters and barges—Place might have imagined himself back in Portsmouth harbour. If he did, the sight of a very large and far from innocent-looking vessel sighted in the lee of a small island in the afternoon must have brought him back to reality. This ship he took to be the Scharnhorst.

She looked a fine thing and enviably approachable, but Place was after bigger game. The Scharnhorst—if such she was—had to be left to Lieutenant Hudspeth in X10. Place wished his friend a silent "Good luck" and went on with his job of dodging the traffic.

Lieutenant Donald Cameron, in X6, was having similar experiences. He did not see the Scharnhorst, but he nearly put paid to his chances of seeing the Tirpitz when his steering jammed just as evasive action was essential to avoid an imminent ramming. But both craft got through the day without collision and spent the first part of the night waiting among the small islands of the Brattholm group.

X6 and X7 were now well down the cleft of Alten Fjord; their target lay in the fjord's most southern extremity — a meagre opening called Kaafjord. Kaafjord, squeezed between high cliffs, was hardly a mile and a half across at its mouth; its small bay was admirably suited for anti-submarine nets, booms, baffles and protective minefields. Neither Cameron nor Place doubted that several varieties of these obstacles awaited them.

Place took X7 from the lee of the islands at midnight on the twenty-first; Cameron followed him an hour later. After two hours' running, Place reached his first fence, an anti-submarine net drawn across the entrance to the fjord.

It was of the ordinary curtain type, and Place went underneath it without too much difficulty. He came up and was proceeding normally when he met a patrolling motor launch—and his first bad luck. The boat, coming very fast, forced him to dive deep and suddenly and, while temporarily "blind" from the plunge, Place found his craft trapped in a cocoon of steel nets.

Tore The Midget Free

Place did not want to put a diver out unless it was necessary; he knew that the problem was to free his craft from an encumbrance rather than to take it under an obstacle. By violent and alternate pumping and blowing—it was like a man forcing his way through a snarl of brambles—he eventually managed to shake the midget free of the folds. X7 shot to the surface and, luckily unobserved, dived again immediately.

She had not come out of the struggle unharmed. Place found the gyro-compass badly affected; the trim pump was out of action as well. While he and the crew were doing their best to repair the damage, X7 got herself hooked again, this time by a single wire that had fouled the periscope standard.

In some way she was torn free, and by six o'clock Place was once more heading down the now quickly narrowing fjord. He was about two thousand yards north of the Tirpitz and full day had broken.

Cameron's troubles in X6 were at first mechanical. Soon after leaving the waiting billet in Brattholm the periscope flooded. It was to continue to flood, at arbitrary and generally undesirable moments, for the rest of the attack. One of the explosive charges had also flooded, inducing a considerable list. Thus, as the action reached its crisis, Cameron's boat was not only "blind" but difficult to handle. He was going to need a great deal of luck to reach the battleship—and he was to have it.

Tagged Behind Enemy Boat

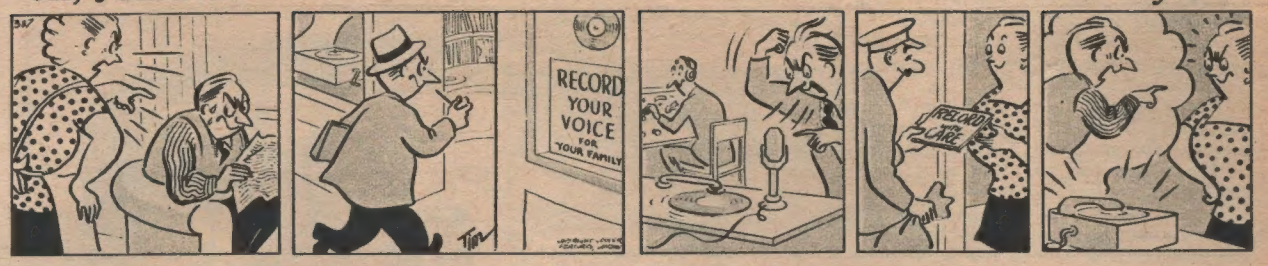
X6, forced to run mainly on the surface, followed the course Place had taken an hour before. Just before entering the mouth of Kaafjord, and with the net ahead, Cameron, in one of the few clear sights his periscope allowed him, spotted a small coaster in front. She was pelting towards the net.

Cameron coolly surfaced in broad daylight and followed in her wake. He suspected that the boat might cross the nets through a gate, and this she did, with X6 trailing fairly close behind her. By an unimaginable chance, the midget was not noticed; her commander blew a snort of relief and dived at once to sixty feet. The first barrier had been passed.

The surface of Kaafjord being much too busy for his liking, Cameron decided to proceed by dead reckoning. But the gremlin that had been wrecking

OH, JOHNNY!

by TIM



his machinery was by no means satisfied. The first lieutenant, John Lorimer, now reported that the periscope hoisting gear was burnt out, which meant manual control of the brake when raising or lowering the already very foggy-lensed "stick."

With a permanent film over his "eye," Cameron's bugbear was now collisions, and the midget avoided some of these only by the classic coat of paint. Life was becoming hectic in the control-room, with the commander snapping rapid orders and counter-orders to Goddard, the helmsman, crouching at the wheel below him.

Once, the craft swept under the bows of a destroyer, between her stem and a mooring buoy. He had hardly recovered from this fright when Cameron, sheering away from the hull of a tanker, just got a periscope sight in time to avoid crashing another buoy. Only Goddard's instant reactions at the wheel were saving them from disaster. They had been close enough to the tanker for Cameron to read her name, the Nordmark.

All Was Quiet Ashore

The tanker lay only half a mile down-fjord from the Tirpitz. In the six hours since leaving her waiting billet in the islands, X6, by luck and superb seamanship, was through the preliminary nets and within striking distance of the target. The time was 7 a.m. Half an hour later, his star still ascending, Cameron followed a picket boat through the gate in the line of heavy nets that enclosed the battleship. The gate closed behind the midget. There was no going back now. They had come to grips.

Meanwhile, as the two submarines were prodding and bumping their way up Kaafjord, life around them was taking its normal course. The people waking in the villages saw an autumn morning like any other. German naval efficiency engaged its well-oiled gears. The men of the anti-aircraft batteries perched on the cliffs were relieved. Launches set out from the jetties; destroyers prepared to patrol.

Aboard the Tirpitz the duties of static warfare were faithfully observed. The officer on watch filled in the log: "0500/22. Called all hands. Set normal A.A. and anti-sabotage watch ashore and afloat. Boat gate in anti-torpedo nets opened for traffic. Hydrophone listening office closed down."

Very soon, the officer on watch might have thought, the usual Spitfire would appear to take its photographs. The guns from cliff and ship would open fire, but the aircraft, far out of range, would depart in its own good time. Then, perhaps, the anchorage would be left in peace. . . .

At 7.10 a.m., just after Cameron in X6 had slid through the boat gate, Godfrey Place was being less fortunate in X7. He, too, was attacking Tirpitz's close defence net, but by the more orthodox method of trying to squeeze under it. He took his craft to seventy-five feet—normally a very safe depth—but was disgusted to find himself stuck. There was no time for such niceties as mesh-cutting; Place bulldozed his way out by blowing to full buoyancy and then going full astern. The midget reacted to this violent treatment by heaving herself to the surface, but she had turned beam-on to the net and was lying against the buoys.

Place crash-dived again, and again X7 stuck fast in the nets. There was no question of finding another way now. With the desperate "in-over-or-through" technique of a jockey riding a jibbing horse at a fence, Place blew the boat to the surface. As he came up he could scarcely believe his eyes. The Tirpitz was dead ahead, with no intervening nets. Dead ahead and only thirty yards away. They were there!

Under The Target's Belly

X7 dived hastily. "Forty feet—full ahead." Three minutes of suspense and then an impact: X7 had hit the battleship under "B" turret on the port side. She slid under the keel gently—the starboard charge was released in the full shadow of the ship's hull. A deeper dive. "Sixty feet—slow astern." Now the port charge slipped off and wavered to the bottom. The thing was done. Place dived his craft to one hundred feet and guessed at a course that would take her out and away. It was 7.20 a.m.

Twenty minutes earlier, Cameron had gone in with his attack. His luck with the boat gate soon deserted him. Shortly after passing through the gap, X6 ran aground in shallow water on the north side of the nets. So shallow that she had to come up to get free. X 6 dived again at once, but now she had been spotted by a look-out on the battleship.

This man reported a "long, black, submarine-like object one hundred yards abeam," and for five valuable minutes his sighting was discussed. Some aboard thought it had been a porpoise. Or a shark? Surely not a shark. Not in these parts. And should they tell the officer? Some German fear of ridicule delayed reporting and gave Cameron the vital seconds needed to close inside the battleship's heavy armament.

It was to be the last of his good fortune. Five minutes later, with Cameron still "blind," the midget hit a hidden rock and lurched on top once more. This time there was no talk of porpoises. The Germans knew her for what she was, and the firing began.

The midget, diving at once, was now about eighty yards from the ship. Cameron was working by guess. His periscope was useless and his gyro-compass astray; he was trying to find the Tirpitz by her shadow. After two minutes of groping, X6 hit something hard. A net? A boom? Cameron did not stop to ask himself; he knew he must be almost under the battleship now. He brought X6 to the surface: the target towered above him.

Small arms fire was intense: the bullets whanged from the casing. Hand grenades fell about the craft and exploded leaping shocks of spray. Cameron went on with his work. He ordered his crew to destroy secret equipment and directed John Lorimer to take the craft astern. Seconds later, the hydroplanes scraped against the

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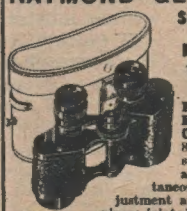

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battleship's hull and the charges were released. The job was done, but there was now no hope of escape.

Cameron ordered: "Bail out." Just as the craft was scuttled, a picket boat—its German crew vainly trying to secure a line to the sinking X6—swirled up to and among the floating men. A few minutes afterwards, Cameron and his crew, wet but proud, were huddled on the deck of the ship they had come to destroy. They had set their charges to explode in an hour's time, at 8.15 a.m. It was, they decided, going to be a very interesting wait.

At about this time, Place was struggling to take X7 away from the Tirpitz as fast as he could. His desire for speed was considerably whetted by the knowledge that his own charges were due to explode in fifty minutes; he had no desire to be on the receiving end of four tons of amatol. Almost immediately, at sixty feet, he hit a net; he got out of this, but was to be in and out of others for the next thirty minutes.

X7 was now in a bad state. Of the three air bottles, two were exhausted and less than half remained of the third. This was soon used, and Place ordered the compressor to be started. At 7.50, after an unsuccessful struggle with a particularly intractable net, the midget surfaced and, still going ahead, got past the obstacle by sliding over the supporting buoys.

Shot To The Surface

Bullets were pattering on the casing and the shock of depth charges shook the pressure hull. Air appearing to be more dangerous than water, Place vented all the main ballast tanks and went to the bottom at 120 feet. The compressor was run once more, and the men were trying to nag the craft clear of yet another net when a tremendous explosion shot them to the surface. Place was then instantly aware of two things—both distressing. The Tirpitz was still afloat, and his own craft was unmanageable.

For the next ten minutes, X7 plunged and surfaced wildly. Compass and depth gauges were out of action; the hull was being frequently holed by the now intensive and accurate fire from the battleship and other surface craft. After a final effort to get command of his boat, Place came up for the last time, by good fortune a few yards from a massive wooden gunnery buoy. Under fire at once, Place thought it better to abandon ship on the surface; too many depth charges were exploding below to make escape by the Davis apparatus desirable.

As it was, his decision did not matter. X7 had hardly surfaced when, holed all over her pressure hull, she began sinking rapidly. Only Godfrey Place, standing under fire on the casing, managed to scramble on to the buoy before his craft went to the bottom with three of his crew still aboard.

For a few minutes he watched the pandemonium in the fjord. Then a picket boat arrived and embarked him for the Tirpitz. There, as he stood shivering on her deck under the guns of "Y" turret, he was joined by Donald Cameron and the crew of X6. They had much to tell him.

NEXT WEEK: The Tirpitz goes up—and the Germans panic

LIFE WITH FATHER

Bertram Mills, the circus owner, is the famous father described on page 30 by his son, Bernard.

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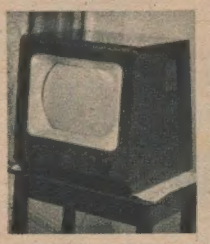

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For ten winners of £2 10s., see *"Bullets" Bulletin*. 50 *Bullets* Season Tickets and 1,500 "Good Shot" Prizes have also been posted.

RULES 1. First Prize for best *Bullet* received. Others in order of merit; the test is of cleverness, aptness and originality.
2. Editor undertakes that all *Bullets* received shall be accorded careful consideration by competent Adjudicators.
3. As entry-fee enclose P.O. or stamps as indicated on coupon. Fee submitted will be taken to cover *Bullets* in coupon order—any sent in excess will be disqualified. Plain-paper entries are full rate. If using P.O. make payable to JOHN BULL, cross /& Co./, write name and address on back. Coupons must not be mutilated. Forces half-rate for *Bullets* and Crosswords for entry-fees not exceeding 2s. if coupons personally completed and Service rank indicated.
4. Entries accepted by post only and on condition that results of this week's Contests (in *Bulletin* and *Gazette*, dated October 3, and in JOHN BULL dated October 10), also Editor's decision in any matter of dispute, are accepted as final and legally binding. Odhams employees (and families) ineligible.
(See "Daily Herald" on Saturday, September 26, for early news of *Bullets* No. 1,902 result.)

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Across Clues **XWORD 854**

1. There's little doubt draughts make many a person think of
3. May be hotter than one likes
5. A man's this may mean something very real to him
6. Noah knew the Flood was coming; the others were this
8. If ground isn't properly drained, it may well become this from gardener's viewpoint
10. It's rarely necessary for one to roar
12. Though varying to some degree in size, they aren't really big vessels

Down Clues

1. What some people are incapable of dropping when on holiday
2. Men find they haven't so many friends when they are
4. Worker who gets this over the weekend faces Monday morning in better heart
7. Anybody keeping one must show a sense of responsibility
8. A girl's dazzling beauty can make a young man this
9. May well be associated with craft of some kind
10. Sometimes the sole purpose of one will be to obstruct
11. No help to rowing eight on river

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Winner—sender of most meritorious set of Answers received—decided by Adjudication Committee on basis of aptness and accuracy. Ties divide. Entrants limited to one prize per contest and to entry equal to 16 Squares. Signature indicates agreement to Rules.

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